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ABSTRACT

This handbook seeks to help Head Start parent involvement coordinators clarify their role and explore new ways to do their job well. In chapter one, a history of parent involvement in Head Start is presented. Chapter two focuses on roles, relationships, and duties of the parent involvement coordinator. Chapter three explores staff attitudes towards parents, while chapter four deals with the basic tasks of parent involvement. Chapters five through eight focus on ways in which coordinators can promote parents' participation in each of four forums - decision-making groups, the classroom, parent activity groups, and the home. Chapter nine provides guidance on writing a parent involvement plan. In chapter ten, the basic elements of the required communications system are discussed. Chapters eleven and twelve suggest methods for documenting and evaluating parent involvement. Chapter thirteen closes the handbook with some thoughts about how Head Start can affect families. Appended are suggestions for further reading and for finding resources in the community as well as lists of organizations providing information and materials for parent and child educators and those serving parents and children with special needs. (RH)

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A Handbook for Involving Parents In Head Start

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FOREWORD

"The greatest good we can do for others is not just to share our riches with them, but to reveal theirs to themselves"

. . . Sister Judith
Full Circle Associates

Parent involvement coordinators believe in parents. They seek out parents' strengths and welcome their initiatives. They relish the exchange of ideas and support. They join parents in a partnership which encourages growth and celebrates confidence.

As you know, being a parent involvement coordinator is not always easy. Often staff members become entrenched in habit, communities return to indifference, parents grow weary. Your tasks are varied and others' expectations pull you in many directions. Focusing your energy is difficult.

This handbook seeks to help you as you clarify your role and explore new ways to do your job well. It builds on Head Start's years of rich and successful experience and so is a tribute to you and all who have shared their insights during these years.

In Chapter One, a history of parent involvement in Head Start is presented. Chapter Two focuses on roles, relationships, and duties of the parent involvement coordinator. Chapter Three explores staff attitudes towards parents, while Chapter Four deals with the basic tasks of parent involvement. Chapters Five through Eight focus on ways in which coordinators can promote parents' participation in each of the four forums — decision-making groups, the classroom, parent activity groups, and the home. Chapter Nine provides guidance on writing a parent involvement plan. In Chapter Ten, the basic elements of the required communications system are discussed. Chapters Eleven and Twelve suggest methods for documenting and evaluating parent involvement. Chapter Thirteen closes the handbook with some thoughts about how Head Start can affect the lives of families.

Throughout, the handbook emphasizes Head Start's belief in you — your ideas, your abilities, your commitment to parents. It bids you to believe in yourself.

A WORD ABOUT WORDS

Head Start staff work with parents in a variety of settings and often have responsibilities in addition to those of involving parents. The term, parent involvement coordinator, is used in this handbook to denote the person at the grantee or delegate agency level who assumes responsibility for parent involvement. It is understood that many of the activities described in this book will be conducted at the center level with the help of designated center personnel.

Since children might live with one or both parents, or a grandparent, a foster parent, or a legal guardian, we use the word, parent, to mean the child's primary caregiver. Children are referred to, interchangeably, as male or female.

Chapter One

PARENTS IN HEAD START

> *"It is clear that the success of Head Start in bringing about substantial changes demands the fullest involvement of the parents, parental substitutes, and families of children enrolled in its programs"*
>
> *. . . Head Start Policy Manual*

The 1960's marked a renaissance in America's commitment to assure all citizens an opportunity to live resourceful, equitable, and dignified lives. The writing of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 (EOA) demonstrated the country's willingness to help families still handicapped by poverty by providing services relevant to their aspirations and needs. One of EOA's key targets was this nation's children. Many children were entering first grade with problems which prevented them from keeping pace with their peers.

In 1965, Project Head Start was conceived. The strategy was to intervene before a child entered school. Necessary medical, dental, and nutritional attention would be provided, as well as experiences to encourage and stimulate intellectual and social growth. The aim of the program was to provide economically deprived children with the opportunities their affluent peers took for granted — health and nutritional services, social services, education. The creators of Head Start were astute enough to recognize that intervention with the child alone would not be sufficient to realize the program goals. The child is brought up in a family and lives in a community. Therefore, involving parents, as well as the community, in the child's Head Start experience became paramount.

HEAD START'S COALITION WITH PARENTS AND COMMUNITIES

Head Start began to sensitize communities to the importance of providing services which would contribute to children's development into healthy and well-adjusted adults. Head Start personnel did their planning *with* the community to assure early investment. They worked to keep the community abreast of and interested in the status and needs of Head Start families, so that policy makers and community planners would continue to monitor and adapt programs.

At the same time, Head Start worked to convince parents that their involvement would be most meaningful to them and their children, if their children's Head Start experience was reinforced by the home and community in which they lived and learned. Without this reinforcement, the Head Start experience would remain limited.

Events during the early and middle part of the decade demonstrated that getting people involved was not difficult if the individuals could see that their involvement would make a difference. Head Start therefore outlined specific roles for parents in the program to provide for effective participation. Roles were designed to offer practical opportunities for program participation, for gaining skills to use in a variety of contexts, and for a deepening of self-confidence and self-esteem. The assumption was made that, as parents began to see themselves as effective influences on their children and their communities, their involvement could be sustained.

THE EVOLVING ROLE OF PARENTS

The history and evolution of parent involvement in Head Start demonstrates the capability of a

national program to use the best information it has to design sound services, to exercise the broadness of imagination to experiment, to sustain the courage to systematically reevaluate its efforts, and the energy to reinvest its findings into a program.

Head Start initially saw parents as learners, seeking ways to enrich their child's experience, and fulfilled its responsibility to them by providing education in such areas as nutrition, budget management, and concepts of child development and child rearing. It paid serious attention to the dignity and integrity of parents by giving them a fundamental role in designing their own parent education programs.

In early discussions, Head Start administrators and early childhood specialists suggested using parents in the program as volunteers and aides. They felt this would give parents an opportunity to observe alternate forms of teaching and discipline, and would enable parents to increase their own repertoire of responses to their children. The idea was seized by those who were strong advocates of the use of paraprofessionals in anti-poverty programs.

Evaluations and reports which filtered in from the field added further reasons for bringing parent paraprofessionals into local programs. Parent involvement coordinators realized that parents needed to overcome some of their own feelings of inadequacy before they could serve as strong and convincing models of competence for their children. It seemed logical to hire parents to work in Head Start programs and to use the centers as training grounds for building skills and experiences which would increase parents' eligibility in the competitive job market. Career ladders were developed and parents were recruited as parent involvement coordinators, teachers, teachers' aides, bus drivers and cooks.

Parents were being encouraged to make decisions about their own education as well as the education of their children. This reflected what was happening in the rest of the country at the time. The civil rights movement, new thresholds of minority group-consciousness, and the effectiveness of collective action had revitalized citizen participation in the design, implementation and evaluation of human services. The federal government had mandated parent participation through its policies and guidelines for Head Start and Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

The fledgling Head Start programs were opened under the auspices of the Community Action Program. The Economic Opportunity Act read that a community action program was one "which is developed, conducted, and administered with the maximum feasible participation of the residents of the areas and members of the groups served . . . "

Consultants and inspectors from the Office of Economic Opportunity relied on instructions which gave parents and other residents of poverty areas this measure of control as they assessed Head Start programs throughout the country.

In 1967, Head Start issued the first formal *Manual of Policies* and *Instructions* outlining the four areas of parent participation which are still the hallmark of parent involvement in Head Start today:

- Parents as decision-makers.
- Parents as paid staff, volunteers, and observers in the classroom.
- Parents involved in activities which they themselves have helped to develop.
- Parents working at home with their own children in cooperation with Head Start staff to support the child's Head Start experiences.

Parents as decision-makers headed the list because it was anticipated that this would be the most difficult to implement. Parents, staff, and community representatives needed to develop a partnership in decision-making. It was to be a mutual learning process for parents and professionals alike and not a movement to give parents total programmatic control.

The manual recommended a staffing formula for parent involvement and a hierarchy of parent advisory committees so that parents would be able to influence the program at all levels. In 1969 Manual 10A, *Parent Involvement, A Workshop of Training Tips for Head Start Staff*, appeared, stating that at least 50 percent of the Parent Advisory Committee or Council must be parents and that they must be democratically elected to their posts by the parents of children currently enrolled in the program.

In August of 1972, revisions known as Instructions I-30, Section B2 (70.2) noted that only by providing parents with an opportunity to influence the program would Head Start's objective of enabling all children to reach their maximum potential be realized. The word "advisory" was dropped and Parent Policy Committees and Councils were delegated responsibilities for staffing, budget, curriculum, grant requests, and other matters relating to program operation. Parents were given veto power over the remaining 50 percent of the membership on these policy groups.

The instructions introduced the concept of Head Start as a social change agent. They specifically stated that in order for children to maintain the momentum they had gathered, families must understand the developmental changes occuring in their children and provide continuity for them within the family and the community. The directive pointed to change as a sound prerequisite for growth. It continued that "successful parental involvement enters into every part of Head Start, influences other anti-poverty programs, helps bring about changes in institutions in the community and works toward altering the social conditions that have formed the systems which surround the economically disadvantaged child and his family". Parents were no longer adjunct to the program, but central to it.

Parent involvement could no longer be treated as an isolated component. It had become the undergirding for the entire program and was to determine how all related services were to be organized and administered. Parents were to be involved in the major components of Head Start. Each of the components — health, education, and social services — were required to enlist parents to plan and participate in their programs. Staff responsible for other components were to work with the parent involvement staff to ensure a comprehensive, well-integrated plan for involving parents.

Since all parent involvement activities were to be designed to potentially influence and affect other anti-poverty programs, Head Start was thereby connected to the community action network. Parent involvement represented the means by which Head Start's objective of eliminating poverty through community action could be met.

FORMS OF PARENT PARTICIPATION

Head Start offers four primary avenues for parent participation. First, parents join in making decisions about what kind of program to have and how it will operate. Second, parents participate in the classroom as paid employees, volunteers, and observers. Third, parents participate in adult activities which they have planned. Fourth, parents, as prime educators, work with their own children, with the support of the Head Start staff.

Involvement in Decision-Making

Parents join Head Start center staff in making decisions about content and operation of the program and how they and their child will participate in it. Parents will more readily participate if the activities suit their tastes and needs. Therefore, parents' contributions to the design of the program are necessary for its success.

In addition to this informal decision-making process, there is a formal structure in which parents may participate in policy-making and the operation of the program. This structure varies from program to program, but normally consists of a Center Committee at the center level, a Parent Policy Committee at the delegate level, and a Parent Policy Council at the grantee level. Some programs also establish Classroom Committees.

Involvement in the Classroom

Parents who visit and work in the classroom have a better understanding of what the center is doing for their children and the kind of help they may need at home. Their presence demonstrates to the children that their parents are interested in what they are doing at the center. Too, the staff and parents have a good opportunity to become better acquainted and to learn from each other.

Parents may participate in the classroom as paid employees, volunteers, or observers. Qualified parents receive first consideration for employment. As volunteers, parents participate in classroom activities and supplement the services of paid employees. This experience helps them to develop greater skills and self-confidence, consider a variety of child-rearing techniques, and gain experience that could qualify them for paid employment. All parents are encouraged to visit the classroom and observe what goes on during the year.

Involvement in Parent-Oriented Activities

Parents are respected as adults with interests and aspirations of their own. At the beginning of each year they develop a plan of activities together which give them ongoing opportunities to learn, share, and grow. These activities include adult education programs. In addition, parents work together on community problems of common concern such as health, education, and housing.

Involvement in Home Activities With Their Children

Through home visits by the center staff and suggestions for activities which parents and children can do together, Head Start guides and assists parents in encouraging their children's development. This kind of parent participation reinforces and supports the child's total Head Start experience.

Although parents are not required to permit home visits in order for their child to participate in Head Start, they should be made aware of the advantages of this service. If parents know that the Head Start staff views them as the prime educators of their child, they are likely to accept the staff's assistance in helping their child at home.

NEW DIRECTIONS IN PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Throughout its existence, Head Start has continued to learn from itself. Three years after its initiation, Head Start noted that children were coming into the program with irreversible deficits. Intervention had to begin earlier — as close to birth as possible. Thirty-four *Parent and Child Centers* were established throughout the country beginning in 1968.

These centers recognized the total family as a child-rearing system. Their aim was to reach and strengthen the total family — infants, toddlers, preschoolers, school-age children, adults — through a flexible array of intervention strategies. These included home-based programs for infants and toddlers, centers for pre-schoolers, day care for children of working parents, services for pregnant teenagers, and child and family advocacy programs. The focus was on parent-child interaction, and the program offered parent education on a systematic basis directed toward parents as the prime educators of their children and as educators of other parents.

Head Start's growing recognition of parents as the major facilitators of their children's development also led to the formation of *Home Start* in 1972. This offered a different model for parent involvement. Using paraprofessional home visitors to help parents increase their parenting skills with their own children at home, Home Start has begun to answer some of the questions about how adults learn, how parents teach their children, and how programs can most effectively support parents.

In 1974, the *Child and Family Resource Program* was created to assure the continuity and integration of comprehensive health and welfare services for children from the prenatal period through the early school years. It, too, recognized the total family as a child-rearing system with distinct aspirations and values.

Head Start had long been sensitive to the limited impact it could have on children in its relatively brief encounter with them. It was equally aware of the potentially powerful and ongoing role parents could play as advocates throughout their children's school years. *Project Developmental Continuity* was established in 1975 to discover ways to foster working relationships among preschool and elementary school staffs and parents as children moved from home to preschool to school. The project is training parents and public schools to work together.

Data and experience from all of the above projects indicate that parents are eager to learn about their children and their parenting skills and will participate in education programs if their self-esteem and cultural heritage are respected, and if they are permitted to design and choose the program or combination of programs most relevant to their needs.

In 1976, the *Exploring Parenting Program* was offered to Head Start programs throughout the country as a pilot effort in parent education. The program invited participation and input by parents as they explored options in working with their children and strengthened the parenting skills they already possessed. Hundreds of programs throughout the country became enthusiastically involved in *Exploring Parenting* after it was officially launched in 1978 and made available to all Head Start programs interested in using it. It represents the first parent education curriculum developed by the Head Start Bureau for Head Start parents.

Chapter Two

THE PARENT INVOLVEMENT COORDINATOR

> *"A parent involvement coordinator must be able to work in poorly defined, uncharted situations, since this aspect of the program is the newest, with the least amount of precedent and formal training provided, while its scope and depth are boundless, and its significance for the families is paramount."*
>
> —*Bea Fitzpatrick, 1968*

Knowing who they are and what is unique about their job fosters confidence in parent involvement coordinators. Being clear about their roles, relationships, duties, and priorities makes their job easier. The coordinators need to understand the dimensions and potential of the positions they hold.

ROLE OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT COORDINATOR

Because of the differences in the structure and staffing of Head Start programs, the responsibilities of parent involvement coordinators vary from center to center and from agency to agency. In some programs coordinators work directly with parents. At delegate or grantee levels they supervise other staff who have direct parent contact. Often, coordinators are responsible for social services as well as parent involvement.

No matter what their specific responsibilities are, parent involvement coordinators serve as facilitators, coordinators, and in some cases, supervisors, within the Head Start program. In all cases, they are a critical part of a team effort to involve families fully in the program.

As Facilitator

Parent involvement coordinators facilitate, or make it easier, for others to do their jobs — as teachers, parents, committee members, or service providers. They do not do for others what others can and should do for themselves, but rather help them find ways to assume and fulfill responsibilities which are theirs.

Coordinators are willing to sit down with a parent, staff member or agency representative to talk through an idea or problem and find a solution. They know who to call when someone asks for help or information. They are supportive, reinforcing colleagues' and parents' efforts to make wise decisions and act on them.

As Coordinator

Parent involvement coordinators have an overview and understanding of how parents can and should be involved in every aspect of the program. They help staff members to find opportunities for parent participation in each component and to schedule activities so that conflicts are avoided. They notify parents of upcoming events and help them to plan and evaluate activities, using staff members as resources. In short, they help staff and parents to work together harmoniously.

As Supervisor

As supervisors, parent involvement coordinators at the delegate or grantee agency level oversee the performance of staff who are responsible for parent involvement. They begin by making sure the staff know what their duties are and how to perform them. They provide regular inservice

training through workshops and individual conferences. Whenever possible, they accompany staff on home visits and join them in parent meetings. This active participation allows the supervisors to answer questions, make suggestions, and give immediate reinforcement and support to the staff. They teach the staff techniques for self-assessment and, with them, evaluate their performance regularly. In their dealings with staff as well as parents, they model a professional attitude of honesty, openness, and respect for confidentiality.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS

Coordinators who understand that they are members of a team encourage the staff to cooperate. How they develop relationships with directors, other staff members, parents, and children will demonstrate their commitment to this cooperation.

With The Director

Usually coordinators report to directors of agencies; in some cases, they may report to social services directors or parent involvement specialists. When directors value the role of coordinators and support their efforts for parent participation, the staff will usually do the same. If coordinators look to directors for guidance in establishing priorities and working within the organization, they will more easily gain the cooperation of directors and staff. By sharing their knowledge of the community and their understanding of parents and their needs, coordinators help directors meet their responsibility for the smooth functioning of the total program. Together, they train staff, parents and community members to be effective members of policy-making groups.

With The Staff

Mutual respect and good rapport make it easier for coordinators and staff to do their jobs successfully. Through training and planning sessions the coordinators promote the staff's understanding of parent involvement. They stimulate the staff to devise creative ways to involve parents in the program. Coordinators keep staff informed of parent activities and encourage them to participate when appropriate.

Recognizing that it is sometimes difficult for several people with as many opinions or priorities to agree, they provide opportunities for staff to come together to talk through ideas, feelings and differences. Coordinators recognize that conflicts are sometimes inevitable and help people find healthy ways to resolve impasses.

With Parents

Coordinators' relationships to parents are those of helper, resource, and friend. Their belief in parents helps parents to accept and enjoy their role as the primary educators of their children. With coordinators, parents can try out new ideas, explore feelings, and get support. Coordinators make it easier for parents to meet their own responsibilities by referring them to services of assistance and support within Head Start and the community. In addition, they help parents to plan adult-oriented activities to meet their needs.

With the Children

"You came to my house" has a familiar, excited ring to it. Children love having the adults from their Head Start world cross into their home world as much as they enjoy having their parents come into the center. The coordinator who has spent time with a child in both settings has a better grasp of the child's and the parents' styles and personalities, and the context in which they live. Knowing the coordinator in both places can also help children bridge their home and center worlds.

With the Community

In the community the parent involvement coordinators are highly visible representatives of the Head Start program. They use community resources wisely, and are convincing about how Head Start can help the community in return. In doing so, they usually work closely with the social services director.

If coordinators live within the community, they carry added weight as citizens attempting to help their own community meet its own needs. The coordinator who is new to a community would be

well-advised to spend the first few weeks becoming acquainted with the area — using neighborhood laundromats, stopping in at the community center, patronizing community stores, attending local meetings. He or she thus discovers who the grassroots leaders are and has an opportunity to meet them. These relationships will be useful in the coordinator's future efforts in recruiting families, enlisting community support, exploring job opportunities for parents, and developing comprehensive services for Head Start families.

With Others

The coordinator should make an effort to develop good relationships with the regional office and grantee staff, as well as the training and technical assistance providers. The coordinator who is able to accept guidance from them and to reciprocate with honest comments on what works and what does not contributes to the development of sound programs and policies.

DOING THE JOB

Knowing his or her role in Head Start and the kinds of relationships he or she has with others provides the parent involvement coordinator with an orientation to this job. Actually doing the job requires more information. The coordinator needs to know what the duties are, what jobs to tackle first, and how to use time well.

Writing a Job Description

The roles and relationships of the parent involvement coordinator are complex. In order to focus energy efficiently, the coordinator needs a clear delineation of duties. A written job description provides this.

At a minimum, a job description is an outline of specific duties that must be performed by the person holding the job. It tells what must be done, not how to do it. Usually the job description gives the title of the person to whom the employee reports — his or her supervisor. Information such as salary range, qualifications, and major functions may also be included.

If no job description for the parent involvement coordinator exists, the coordinator can write one. Before beginning, the coordinator needs to study Head Start policies, objectives, and performance standards for parent involvement so that the tasks he or she later outlines contribute to the accomplishment of these goals. Next, the coordinator should discuss the job with the supervisor as well as other staff members. These discussions can help the coordinator clarify ideas and understand the expectations of others. The final job description must be approved by the supervisors and shared with the staff. Unless those with whom the coordinator works understand these duties as clearly as the coordinator, confusion will persist.

Following is a sample job description which can be used as a guide. It does not tell what duties are appropriate for coordinators; each program must decide that. Rather, it offers ideas on how to describe duties and how specific to be when doing so. It also provides a format for writing a job description.

SAMPLE JOB DESCRIPTION
Parent Involvement Coordinator

Major Function: Responsible for the involvement of parents in the Head Start Program in conformance with the Head Start performance standards.

Reports to: Director

Responsibilities and Duties:
Develops comprehensive plan for the parent involvement component in cooperation with parents and other staff.

Organizes orientation for parents and regular group meetings.

Facilitates the formation of the center committee and orients parents to their roles and functions; trains parent representatives for participation in policy committee and council; trains parents for civic activity.

Assists parents in assessing their needs and developing programs and activities to meet them, using staff and community resources.

Works with staff in involving parents in education, health and social service components in conformance with performance standards and educates them to parents' roles and needs.

Plans and develops a communications system among program management, staff, and parents using a variety of methods.

Collects and analyzes information which documents parent involvement in the program; maintains records of parent participation.

Develops procedures and assists staff and parents in evaluating parent involvement in the program.

Setting Priorities and Using Time Well

Because many tasks demand the attention of the parent involvement coordinator, it helps to determine which tasks are more important, which contribute most to meeting the objectives of the program. These tasks should be given priority and the coordinator should spend more time on them than on others.

The coordinator can begin setting priorities by rating the duties listed in his or her job description in order of importance. Beneath each duty, the tasks involved might be listed. It might be helpful to ask other staff members to rate the coordinator's duties in the same way and discuss their reasons. In the process of discussing priorities, the coordinator might decide to reorder the list. In any case, priorities will probably need to be adjusted periodically as the needs of the parents and the program change.

After establishing priorities, the coordinator should analyze how well he or she spends time. For several weeks, the coordinator should keep a record of activities by the hour. (See following sample.) When that is completed, a comparison can be made between time allocations and the list of priorities. If the coordinator is not spending most time on the most important tasks, he or she can rearrange a schedule to do so. While that is not a simple task, in the long run it contributes to greater accomplishment and job satisfaction.

DAILY TIME LOG
(Sample)

8:30-9:00	Eased into day — coffee with Irma in the kitchen.
9:00-10:00	Met with Julia (director) and Mrs. Watson (chairperson, Policy Council) to draw up agenda for next Council meeting.
10:00-10:30	Called local Social Security Administration Office to invite field representative as speaker for next month's "Know Your Rights" meeting — will be explaining benefits available to handicapped kids through Supplementary Security Income Program.
	Called Mr. Lake, former board president of local bank to remind him of next Policy Council meeting — Mr. L. has been sitting in as a trainer in policy group responsibilities and processes.
	Called Mrs. Vitarelli to arrange home visit for next Thursday morning.
10:30-11:00	Spend half hour with Katie who is frustrated by passive parent volunteer K. — is going to try giving her 2-3 specific tasks each time she is there and actively reinforce her for following through.
11:00-12:00	Updated records on attendance at last parent meeting, last "parent involvement plan" planning session, parent volunteer time.
12:00-1:00	Lunch with kids and staff.
1:00-3:00	Met with parents and staff to continue work on parent education plan.
3:00-4:30	Home visit to the Bakers — took article about La Leche League to Mrs. B. as she is encountering much resistance from husband and family in her wish to breast-feed new baby.

Chapter Three

EXPLORING STAFF ATTITUDES

> *"If parents and teachers could meet often enough and intimately enough to develop primary group attitudes toward each other, and if both parents and teachers might have their say unreservedly, such modifications of school practice and parental upbringing might take place as would revolutionize the life of children everywhere."*
>
> *—Waller, 1932*

Successful parent involvement is based on trust between staff and parents and a desire to work together. The attitudes of staff toward parents greatly affect their partnership. Staff attitudes are closely related to the degree of their understanding of the need for parent involvement, their personal feelings toward parents, and the clarity with which their responsibilities and those of parents are delineated.

Acting as a catalyst in developing close working relationships between parents and staff, the coordinator offers staff a clear rationale for parent involvement, and creates a non-threatening atmosphere in which they can examine and work through their feelings toward parents. The coordinator helps staff to define their responsibilities toward parents and children and accept the limitations of their influence.

NEED FOR INVOLVING PARENTS

In many situations, ranging from staff meetings to casual conversations, the parent involvement coordinator will be called upon to explain the reasons for involving parents in the Head Start program. Some reasons may be gleaned from the pages of the policy manual or the speeches of specialists, but the most obvious and forceful ones develop from an intuitive understanding of family relationships and plain common-sense.

Following are five reasons, among many, for involving parents.

- Parents have primary responsibility for their child, although they delegate a limited amount of it to the staff; it is the right and responsibility of parents to participate in decisions about their child's care and education.
- Parents' influence on their child is greater and longer-lasting than the staff's; when staff share knowledge, skills, and experience with parents, they ultimately are helping the child.
- A child needs to feel good about his background; he is reassured by the mutual demonstration of respect, appreciation and trust among the most important people in his life — his parents and teachers.
- A child needs to receive messages about her worth and expectations for her behavior which are clear and consistent; conflicts can be minimized if parents and staff clarify, communicate, and understand each other's values.
- Staff can learn from parents what is healthy and effective in family teaching styles, just as parents can learn alternative child-rearing methods; both need opportunities to watch, talk, and work with each other.

EXAMINING FEELINGS

Staff members' feelings about parents color their relationships. Most people are comfortable when they experience positive feelings such as love, affection, admiration, and respect. On the other hand, negative feelings such as jealousy, anger, envy, and hatred usually make a person uncomfortable. In general, people seek relationships in which they are comfortable and avoid those in which they are not. If staff members are uncomfortable with parents, their feelings might be in the way.

Acknowledging Feelings

Staff members have a right to both positive and negative feelings about parents. When staff acknowledge their feelings and think about what causes them, they can deal with the feelings in constructive ways. However, when natural feelings are pushed aside or hidden, they can affect the staff's behavior in indirect ways and subtly sabotage parent-staff relationships.

The first step, then, in dealing with feelings is to acknowledge them, to admit anger, envy or love. Knowing that all feelings are legitimate and that no one will be criticized for their feelings makes this easier. The parent involvement coordinator can assist staff by acknowledging his or her own feelings and listening to staff express theirs. The coordinator need not comment, make judgements, or suggest that they should feel differently. All that is necessary is that he or she attempts to understand what they feel.

Determining What Causes Feelings

Once their feelings are recognized and accepted, the staff can work on figuring out why they feel as they do. What is it that provokes their anger? Why do they get exasperated with a particular parent volunteer? Parent-staff relationships are emotional by their very nature. From two different perspectives in two different situations, these adults care for and wish to help a child. Memories of their own childhood experiences, as well as their backgrounds and education influence how they go about this. Conflicts are inevitable. Following are a few examples of how parent-staff relationships might trigger strong emotions:

- Staff members might identify with the child, want the best for him, and feel angry at his parents for giving him less.
- Staff members might compete with the child's natural parents for influence over him.
- Parents might feel inadequate compared to the staff and angry as a result.
- Staff might fear parents' participation in the classroom as an intrusion into their territory which threatens their power.
- Perhaps staff feel that parents will be critical of them if they become involved in the program.
- Staff might see racial and cultural differences as a threat to their own values and lifestyles.
- Staff may feel guilty because they are materially richer than the parents.

Dealing With Feelings

Acknowledging feelings toward parents and determining what causes them are important steps in improving parent-staff relationships. That is not enough, however. Staff members must face those problem situations which provoke feelings that alienate them from parents. For instance, if teachers find themselves getting angry with parent volunteers who "get in the way" in the classroom, they should consider ways to change this anger-provoking situation. These might range from barring parents from the classroom to improving pre-volunteer training to making volunteer assignments more specific. When all possible ideas have been considered, the staff can decide on a solution which will make them comfortable and contribute to the success of the program.

Often the feelings which alienate staff from parents are caused by administrative or management problems, rather than by parents themselves. Fortunately, these can be remedied, if the staff and administration are willing to try. Sometimes, however, the problem is with a particular staff member or parent. Such cases are more difficult to remedy since ingrained personality traits are not very susceptible to change. It is important, in these instances, to consider the best interests of the total program rather than those of a particular parent or staff member.

CLARIFYING RESPONSIBILITIES

Staff attitudes toward parents are related to how well the responsibilities of each are defined in the Head Start program. Frustration, resentment, and other uncomfortable feelings result when one party shirks his or her responsibility or assumes that of the other. When parents and staff clearly define their own responsibilities and recognize the boundaries which limit them, they can work together more easily.

Parent And Staff Responsibilities

Parents, obviously, have primary responsibility for their child; as the child's legal guardians, they are required to care for and supervise him. They have the right to accept or reject any services offered to their child, their family or themselves. Only in cases of child abuse or neglect can others intervene to assure that a child receives adequate care. (Responsible adults — teachers, health professionals, child program staff, recreation workers — are required by law to report suspected child abuse to the agency primarily responsible in their jurisdiction).

The Head Start staff assume a secondary role in the life and education of the child. They accept the responsibility delegated to them by the child's parents — to care for her, feed her, and teach her for a portion of the day — and are accountable to parents for carrying out those responsibilities.

Taking On Parents' Responsibilities

If staff members take on parents' responsibilities, they injure themselves and the family they wish to help. No staff member can gain a sense of accomplishment from the job if he or she tackles impossible tasks. And trying to do for others what only they can do for themselves is an impossible task. Likewise, parents are demeaned when staff assume their responsibilities. They realize that the staff are, in effect, saying: "You're too poor, too uneducated, too helpless to be an adult, to be a parent, to take responsibility for your actions, to make free choices." Parents also realize that when everything is done for them, they need to do nothing. Rather than supporting parents, this type of assistance diminishes their importance and undercuts their self-confidence. In addition, it prevents staff from respecting parents as adults, as equals, and as partners.

Reaching An Agreement

In order to promote good parent-staff relationships, the parent involvement coordinator can invite parents and staff to discuss and clarify their responsibilities to themselves, to the children, and to each other. Since some responsibilities seem to overlap, it is important to be as specific as possible. During parent meetings, small group workshops or other appropriate gatherings, parents and staff can delineate their responsibilities, big and small. Confusion about times for arriving and leaving, bringing in supplies, attending meetings, or reporting absences can be cleared up by defining who is expected to do what. When parents and staff reach an agreement, they might make a chart listing the responsibilities of each, publish an agreement in their newsletter, or even draw up informal contracts for parents and staff to sign.

Chapter Four

GETTING PARENTS INVOLVED

> *"Head Start believes that the gains made by the child in Head Start must be understood and built upon by the family and the community."*
>
> *—Head Start Policy Manual, 1975*

Parents are important to Head Start because they are important to their child. They are his first teachers and most enduring friends. Long after his formal education ends, he will continue to feel their influence. Head Start can give little to a child unless his parents are involved in the giving.

When parents, as well as children, have opportunities to grow and learn, the benefits to both are more than doubled. As parents develop skills, make friends, and assume responsibility in Head Start, they feel better, not only about themselves, but also about their children. Children then take pride in their parents' accomplishments and feel more confident themselves. The combination of increased confidence, proud role models, and high parental expectations helps the child to profit from the program's services and maintain in the future the advantages of a "head start."

By supporting, rather than usurping, parents' roles as prime educators of their children, Head Start strengthens family life and, consequently, society as a whole. Working from the base of the family, parents can use their Head Start experiences to take responsibility in the community and make decisions affecting the quality of their lives.

Developing and maintaining parent involvement is a big task. At first glance, it might seem impossible. Perhaps that's why it provokes so many questions. Like most big jobs, however, involving parents in Head Start is really a matter of doing many smaller jobs. By approaching and accomplishing them one by one, the parent involvement coordinator can reduce the work to manageable proportions.

This chapter focuses on a few basic tasks which form the backbone of parent involvement — recruiting parents, orienting them to the program, planning and conducting regular meetings, solving problems, and involving parents in each component.

RECRUITMENT OF FAMILIES

Recruiting children for Head Start provides an opportunity to invite parents and other family members to participate themselves. During recruitment, parents get their first impression of Head Start; it is important to make it a good one. Those who recruit parents set the tone for the parent involvement program. If they are comfortable in their role as recruiters, sensitive to parents, and familiar with the community and Head Start, parents are likely to respond to their overtures. If they also involve male family members as they recruit children, men are more likely to participate in the program.

The Recruiters

Head Start staff members, parents, and volunteers from the community can recruit families to participate in the program. Those selected to serve as recruiters should be familiar and comfortable with the people of the community — their culture, life-style, and social etiquette. They also should get to know the community and surrounding area.

Those who recruit should be thoroughly familiar with the services of Head Start. They should

have opportunities to role-play situations they might encounter. It might also help to develop a list of Head Start "sales points" to mention when talking to parents. Following are a few examples:

- Head Start provides medical, dental, nutritional, and social services, as well as education.
- Parents have a voice in running Head Start.
- Parents can visit the program and work as volunteers; when parents qualify for paid positions, they are given first consideration.
- Head Start offers programs for parents as well as children; guardians and all family members are welcome.

Finally, the recruiters should approach parents with respect, tact, and honesty. Parents will overcome apprehension and respond to Head Start's invitation if they are made to feel wanted, needed, and accepted.

Methods Of Recruiting

There is no single best way to interest parents in Head Start; a variety of methods are appropriate — home visits, phone calls, distribution of printed fliers, television and radio announcements. Asking community agencies to refer clients to Head Start often produces results.

The methods of recruitment chosen by each Head Start program should match their resources and the needs and characteristics of the community. No matter which methods are used to interest parents, personal contact should be made at some point in the recruitment process. Such contact is invaluable in promoting full parent participation in the program.

Involving Men

Because some men might feel uncomfortable participating in school-related activities or what they consider a woman's domain, special efforts to involve men might be required. These efforts can begin during recruitment. Following are some suggestions for involving men from the very beginning:

- Make phone calls in the evening and speak to the father or other male family member.
- Schedule home visits at times convenient to the men in the family.
- Address correspondence to both parents.
- Enlist Head Start fathers as recruiters.
- Point out opportunities for male participation in Head Start.

If staff members make it clear from the beginning that men have valuable roles in the program and define those roles in terms acceptable to men, male family members will be more likely to participate.

After recruitment, efforts to fully involve men in the program should continue. Below are some ideas:

- Encourage men to serve on the center committee, policy groups, or special committees in which they have interest or expertise, such as budget, maintenance, or transportation.
- Ask men to help make new equipment — bookshelves, puppet stage, doll house — or repair broken toys.
- Plan activities of special interest to men — home maintenance workshop, poker night, meeting with guest speakers such as athletes, or labor leaders.
- Serve refreshments that appeal to men — beer, burgers, pretzels, pizza.
- Invite men to visit their child's class, share a hobby, go on a field trip, or plan for the children to visit a father's place of work.

ORIENTATION

If parents are to actively participate in Head Start, they need a thorough orientation to the program and their roles in it. Orientation can take place at the agency, center, or individual level. At the center level, an orientation meeting at the beginning of the year gives parents a preview of future activities. The parent involvement coordinator plans and carries out the orientation with the

help of other staff members and parents. Pre-orientation activities can set the stage for a joint effort to plan, conduct, evaluate, and follow-up the orientation meeting.

Pre-Orientation Activities

In order to get acquainted with the parents and to enlist their aid in planning the orientation, it is helpful for the staff to plan an informal get-together with parents as soon as the children have been selected. While socializing with the parents, staff members can discuss the orientation and ask individuals to join in planning and preparing for it.

The following suggestions for planning an informal social activity are applicable to planning the orientation as well.

- Make a home visit before sending out invitations.
- Choose a time and place convenient for parents.
- Decide with director who will be responsible for refreshments, decorations, name tags, and other necessary details.
- Mail invitations to parents, enclosing a stamped, self-addressed envelope for their response. The response card should include statements for parents to mark, such as, "I will attend," "I will bring a guest," "I will send someone in my place," "I need transportation," "I need a babysitter." Encourage both parents to attend and indicate if grandparents, siblings, and others are welcome. Following the invitation with a phone call is often helpful.
- Publicize the event using posters, fliers, and handbills. Inform community organizations about the meeting and ask them to distribute information. Ask radio and TV stations, as a community service, to announce the event.
- Arrange babysitting and transportation services for parents who need them. Staff members, volunteers, and other parents could be asked to provide their services. Eventually, a pool of volunteers could be developed to meet regular and short-term needs of parents.
- At the meeting, provide name tags, perhaps color coded by class, so teachers can easily find and meet parents of their students.
- Have someone, preferably a parent from the previous year, at the entrance to greet parents, assist them in finding their name tags, and perhaps introduce them to a staff member or other parent.
- You might show scrapbook, photographs, a film or video tape from last year's class, as well as photos of previous parent activities. This is a good time to take photos of the parents, and post them somewhere in the center where they and their children can view them later.
- Introduce staff and explain their functions.
- To encourage regular attendance of children, you can distribute a list of names and addresses of children in the class and also indicate on a map where they live, so parents can find someone who lives nearby to bring their child when they are unable to do so. (You must get the approval of each parent before publishing his name, address, or phone number.)

After the get-together, it is important to contact everyone who volunteers to help and include them in planning and conducting the orientation.

Planning and Conducting Orientation

The orientation planning committee should include the center director, staff members from the component and support services, parents from the previous year, and new parents, as well as the parent involvement coordinator. The committee should make decisions about the time, place, content, format, speakers, materials, refreshments, announcements, and publicity. Responsibilities for specific tasks should be determined and a timetable for completion established. Orientation should take place as early in the program year as possible.

The content of the orientation program should include the following:

- The overall goals and objectives of the Head Start program.
- Parent involvement in the overall program, forms of parent participation, rights and responsibilities of parents.
- Needs assessment and the planning process.

- Decision-making and policy groups.
- The role of each staff member, especially the parent coordinator.
- The program content.
- Tour of the center and classrooms.

Written material explaining aspects of the program discussed during orientation may be helpful to parents. Other topics suitable for handouts include a list of staff members and names and positions, a list of parents and children in each class, a list of materials parents can save for the center, suggestions on helping a child adjust to the program, and songs or finger plays being taught in school. A questionnaire about how parents would like to participate in the program could also be distributed. Finally, a brief evaluation in checklist form could be used to get parents' reactions to the orientation.

Follow-up and Evaluation

After the orientation, parents would welcome a note from the coordinator, expressing pleasure in meeting them, as well as a summary of the orientation meeting. If the note is warm and personal, including specific comments about the parents or their child, they will be all the more pleased. The use of informal notepaper also lends a personal touch. Following the orientation, the coordinator and staff should evaluate the degree to which they met their objectives for the orientation and write a summary report including the evaluations by parents.

MEETINGS

Meetings are an integral part of parent involvement and should be held on a regular basis at the Head Start center. Subcommittees of parents can meet more frequently at times and locations convenient for them. During the course of a year, parents will meet for a variety of purposes and conduct meetings in many ways. Among other reasons, parents meet to make decisions, participate in educational activities, prepare for the program's self assessment and validation process, and give and receive information. The parent involvement coordinator can assist in planning meetings, locating materials and resources, providing information about group processes and techniques, evaluating the meetings and planning ways to improve parent attendance and participation.

Planning Meetings

If a meeting is well planned, parents will more readily understand its purpose, participate actively, and recognize that the planners valued their time. Every parent meeting should be planned by parents, who gradually take on more and more responsibility with the assistance of the parent involvement coordinator and any staff members whose expertise is needed. Planning should begin at least three weeks prior to the meeting to allow time for revising plans if necessary and notifying parents well in advance. The following steps should be taken in planning a meeting: defining the purpose; determining the resources needed; choosing methods; planning the agenda; making physical arrangements; and notifying parents.

Purpose Of Meeting

Each meeting should have a well-defined purpose. The planners will know their aim is direct and clear if they can answer these questions: Why are the parents getting together? What do we want to accomplish? Are we sure that having a meeting is the best way to accomplish this? The purpose of a meeting might be as simple as becoming acquainted with each other or as complex as making recommendations for curriculum development. In either case, the purpose should be absolutely clear to the planners and participants.

Resources for Meeting

The next step in planning is determining what resources are needed and available to accomplish the purpose. These resources might include people who could provide information or services, books, posters, audio-visual materials, food, supplies, and money. Arrangements should be made as early as possible to obtain what is needed for the meeting.

Methods Of Conducting Meetings

16 A variety of methods for giving and receiving information, sharing feelings, and accomplishing

tasks can be used during the meeting. The planners should choose those methods most appropriate for their purpose. Some examples are discussions, demonstrations, lectures, audio-visual materials, exhibits and workshops.

Discussion is a natural way to share experiences and feelings, debate ideas, and work together on common problems. Discussions happen all the time, but they can be planned to accomplish a specific goal. It is often helpful to use a "trigger device" to start parents talking, such as asking a specific question, posing a particular problem, or showing a film. Every discussion group needs a leader to keep the conversation flowing and deal with potential problems. Preferably, the leader should be a parent. The parent involvement coordinator can join in as co-leader, if necessary. Following are some tips for the discussion leader:

- Get participants to talk to each other, not just to you; if they direct comments or questions to you, bounce them back to another parent with a question such as, "Do you agree?"
- Avoid filling in when there is silence; wait for others to respond.
- Join in only to make things clearer, summarize information, or add your ideas.
- If the conversation strays too far from the topic, gently remind participants of the purpose and encourage them to keep moving along.
- Avoid having one person dominate the discussion; ask others for their opinions.
- Try to include quiet members of the group, but avoid embarrassing them with direct requests for their comments; try to get to know them better individually and show them, outside the group, that you respect their opinions.
- Make sure you don't discourage an open discussion by rewarding "right" answers and punishing forthright speakers in subtle ways.

Trying to accomplish a task or make a decision is often difficult if the discussion group is large. Occasionally it is helpful to divide a large group into smaller ones of less than ten each. Each group can then choose a leader to summarize their discussion for the whole group later.

Demonstrations can be helpful to parents who want to learn how to do something. They are used when spoken or written explanations are insufficient. Handicrafts, food preparations, and many parent-child learning activities can be taught best by demonstration. Questions, discussions, or actual participation in the activity can follow.

When it is necessary to communicate much information in a short time, the *lecture* is useful. This method is more appropriately used by a guest with specialized knowledge than by a staff member who is frequently available. Since the audience has little opportunity to participate when lectures are given (except during a question and answer period), they are likely to lose interest quickly. Consequently, lectures should be used infrequently and only when most appropriate to the purpose of the meeting. When used, lectures should be limited to 20 minutes or less.

Audio-visual Materials such as films, filmstrips, slides, records, and video-tapes are usually appealing to parents. The style and content of the materials used should be relevant to the audience; the picture and sound should be of high quality. Planners should preview the materials before the meeting and prepare an appropriate introduction for the audience. Following is a range of suggestions for using films and similar materials:

- Give a brief summary and then show the film straight through; observe parents' reactions for clues about their concerns and feelings, then build a discussion around them afterwards.
- Before showing the film, ask parents to pay particular attention to certain parts, aspects, or themes of the film that will be discussed later.
- After showing the film ask parents to share their first impressions, to mention specific images or sounds they remember.
- Stop the film at certain points to discuss what just happened, what's coming next, or what viewers would do next.
- Show the film a second time to give parents an opportunity to notice things they hadn't seen before or to answer a question that came up in discussion.

An *exhibit* set up in or near the meeting room may be used to introduce the topic of the meeting or to supplement a speech, film or discussion. If parents are to make something at the meeting,

sample finished products could be displayed. Exhibits could include such things as photographs, educational materials, health information, free booklets, and handmade articles.

Workshops are useful in learning or practicing specific skills, such as making puppets or books, planning menus, filing consumer complaints, or art activities. Workshop groups should be limited to a manageable number of people, depending on the topic, and led by a person skilled in the particular area. Usually, it is necessary to allot at least two or three hours for a workshop.

Agenda For Meetings

An agenda, a list of things to be done, should be prepared for each meeting. It should include the name of the chairman of the meeting and other speakers and a description of the activities planned in the order they will occur. Below is a *sample* agenda:

AGENDA

Head Start Parent Meeting
Wednesday, February 10, 8:00 p.m.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION OF GUEST SPEAKER
by Jane Smith, Center Committee Chairman

"HOW YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE AFFECTS YOUR HEALTH"
Martha Street, R.N., Community Health Project

"HAVING YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE CHECKED" — Filmstrip

QUESTION AND ANSWER PERIOD

REFRESHMENTS

INDIVIDUAL BLOOD PRESSURE EXAMS

Notifying Parents

Parents should be notified of each meeting at least two weeks in advance. The notification should include the date, time, and place where the meeting will be held, as well as the purpose and agenda. The notification should be made in writing and include a response card for parents to return to the center. Although the children can carry the notices home to their parents, mailing them is a more reliable method. It is helpful to call parents at home a few days before the meeting to express the hope that they attend. Parent volunteers can assist the coordinator with this task.

Evaluation of Meeting

During and after a meeting, everyone involved has some impressions and feelings about it. Comments, facial expressions, gestures, and body movements express these feelings. Extreme expressions are easy to see — a guest speaker may be given a standing ovation or parents may walk out angrily before he finishes. Usually, the cues are between the extremes. In any case, careful observation of parents' reactions throughout the meeting is the best form of evaluation. Written evaluations by parents can also be helpful, if parents feel comfortable in writing them and if they are not used too often. Having to write an evaluation can sometimes spoil an otherwise pleasant evening. Written evaluations should be short, easy to read, and anonymous, unless the parents wish otherwise. Parents' attendance at meetings, monitored over a period of months, will also indicate the degree of their satisfaction with meetings.

After each meeting, staff members should write down their objective observations about the conduct of the meeting and the parents' reactions. In addition, they should rate the degree to which the objectives of the meeting were met. A brief summary and evaluation of each meeting should be kept on file for further reference.

Improving Meetings

Those who plan meetings can use the evaluations of parents and staff to make improvements in the future. However, obstacles to attendance and full parent participation at meetings are often difficult to pinpoint. The following chart lists some common obstacles to good parent attendance and participation as well as some ideas for overcoming them.

PARENT ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION: OBSTACLES AND IDEAS FOR OVERCOMING THEM

Obstacles	*Ideas for Overcoming Them*
Meeting time inconvenient	Send home a brief questionnaire asking parents to specify most convenient meeting time.
Lack of transportation	Arrange car pools and walk pools; provide Head Start bus and information on public transportation; arrange for transportation.
Lack of babysitters	Provide a nursery at the center or arrange to pool children where sitter is available.
Parents' feelings of inadequacy — that something they say may be out of place or stupid	Arrange informal social events where the parents and staff can become better acquainted. At meetings, leader or PIC should not discount anything parents say. Leader can acknowledge that "We are all initially hesitant to say anything out loud because we think that what we say might not be of interest to the group. But that's why we're here — to share ideas."
Chairpersons may be inexperienced	Coordinator conducts training, coaches chairpersons and takes them along to other well-run meetings to observe.
Meetings may be boring or too formal	Make sure meetings are not too long, check agendas, maintain central focus during meeting, plan some social time, try to informalize meetings without losing structure.
Members might be talked at — with no opportunity to participate	Leader asks questions of group, encourages members to express their viewpoints; staff is reminded that they are there at the invitation of the group in a non-voting, consulting capacity.
Meetings may not accomplish anything	Research topic before meeting; close on a positive note; if issue cannot be resolved, research the topic further and present findings at next meeting or by memo; involve other members in getting more information. Write clear "job description" for the group with purpose, responsibilities, authority, and communications clearly delineated.
Parents may feel uncomfortable or unwelcome	Brief staff on ways to make parents at ease; i.e., comment on something positive their child has said or done, compliment parents on something they have said or done or their appearance. Serve refreshments.
Parents may have overwhelming problems of their own	Arrange personal phone calls or home visits to permit parents to speak openly about their problems. When ready, the coordinator can move from there toward helping the parents resolve the problem.

INVOLVING PARENTS IN EACH COMPONENT

As parents become oriented to the program and comfortable meeting others, the parent involvement coordinator can draw them into a wider range of activities. Each component offers

	EDUCATION SERVICES	HEALTH SERVICES
Parent Education Topics:	• Growth and development of young children emphasizing individual differences (in cooperation with all components, on an ongoing basis). • Observing children's behavior and development at home and in school, and meeting their specific needs. • Building upon school learning in the home, by planning activities and structuring the environment. • Meeting the special needs of children with handicapping conditions. • Locating and using community resources for children with special needs. • Advanced skill development such as CDA credentialing, for those who desire it.	• First aid, prenatal and postnatal care, oral hygiene procedures, lead poisoning, home safety, fire prevention, childhood illnesses and immunization. • Assessing their own family's health needs, finding the services needed, and using them appropriately. • Preventive health education.
Planning Opportunities:	• With education staff, plan training program. • With staff and policy group members, discuss education performance standards and parents' educational aspirations for their children. Choose most appropriate methods for meeting these objectives and write education plan. • Approve of written plan, for classroom and home activities.	• Participate on the Health Services Advisory Committee to plan health services. • Develop forms and procedures to be used in emergencies.
Opportunities for Volunteers:	• Classroom aides. • Consultants and workshop leaders, in areas of competency. • Multi-lingual, multi-cultural resources, helping curriculum reflect the children's culture by advising about and planning activities related to their heritage and language, e.g., holiday celebrations, food preparation, songs, dances, costumes, games, art projects, and stories. • Classroom interpreter for childrens' native language. • Home visitors, trained and supervised by staff.	• Measure height and weight in classroom. • Help with vision screening. • Update health services information to be disseminated to all parents. • Enter data on health records, while protecting confidentiality. • Check immunization records. • Help with oral hygiene program. • Drive other parents to their health appointments and assist with necessary forms and routines. • Serve on Boards of Directors or as volunteers in community health agencies.
Work With Individual Parents:	• Staff and parents prepare an individual program for each child, using information collected from parent during recruitment, enrollment, home visits, parent-teacher conferences, meetings and needs assessment.	• Staff interviews parents about child's health history, and provides immunization record and treatment summary to parents. • Parent accompanies own child to medical appointments.

opportunities for parents to learn more, to plan services with the staff, to volunteer, and to work with staff on a one-to-one basis. The following charts list sample topics for parent education, planning opportunities for parents, opportunities for volunteers, and ways to work with individual parents in each component.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES	NUTRITION SERVICES
• Understanding children's growth and development. • Child-rearing practices and concerns. • How to fully develop child's potential.	• Nutrition needs of young children. • How to make nutritious snacks. • Experimentation in new foods. • Avoiding junk foods. • How to make mealtime a happy family time. • Encouraging positive eating habits. • Knowledge of center menus and how to complement them at home. • How to use food as a learning activity for children. • Food selection and preparation. • Food sanitation and storage. • Low budget menus. • Special diets. • Comparative food shopping, including bulk purchasing, setting up a food co-op, planting vegetable gardens. • Reading and understanding labels, and common terms such as "drink", "natural", "processed", "imitation". • Use of food additives. • Home and money management. • Professional training toward career as food service personnel.
• With Director, mental health professional and mental health coordinator, develop and evaluate plan for delivery of service.	• Assist staff in menu planning. • Parents on policy board on Health Services Advisory Committee. • Center Committee advise nutritionists on special community needs and family food patterns, and review nutrition plan.
• Assist parents in crisis by providing supportive help. • Transport families to mental health services and help them utilize same. • Perform simple observation of children, and work with those needing special help, under supervision and guidance of mental health professional. • Serve on Board of Directors of or as volunteers to child guidance clinics in mental health centers.	• Keeping records of food expenses, menus and health inspections. • Planning menu with nutritionist. • Monitoring nutrition program. • Assisting other families with food shopping or home management. • Eating with children in classroom, and helping to create acceptance of new foods, a pleasant mealtime atmosphere. • Interviewing other families about their home eating habits for input into the nutrition plan, so continuity can be provided between home and school. • Sharing recipes and demonstrating new food preparation to other parents. • Providing nutritious "birthday treats" for their child's class.
• Provide assistance for individual problems by doing any of the following: 1. Observe child in his classroom. 2. Offer suggestions to a teacher. 3. Contact parent for permission to see the child alone. 4. Discuss results of evaluation with parent and together plan a program for the child either in the center or using neighborhood facilities.	• In cooperation with social services, help eligible families receive food assistance. • Early nutrition interview, especially with parents of children with handicapping conditions, to assess their food patterns and needs (nutritionist uses information provided by family, health personnel, teachers, and health records to identify needs and provide individual program for each family and their child).

	SOCIAL SERVICES	PARENT INVOLVEMENT
Parent Education Topics:	• Community services and how to use them. • Where to get job training and counseling.	• Conducting and participating in meetings. • Participating in policy-making groups. • Getting to know important community organizations and agencies. • How to make your voice heard in the community. • Organizing food, babysitting, and other kinds of co-ops. • Putting together a newsletter.
Planning Opportunities:	• Work with staff to develop social services plan. • Planning methods to safeguard confidentiality of records and reports.	• Participate on committee to write parent involvement plan. • Work with staff in preparing for self-assessment and validation of program. • Participate in parent policy groups. • Plan and conduct parent meetings, with staff assistance as needed.
Opportunities for Volunteers:	• Assist in recruitment of families. • Visit and interview community agencies to compile and update resource list. • Serve on community agency boards or volunteer services to community agencies. • Work with other similarly concerned groups to bring about changes in local, state, or federal programs. • Participate in Social Services Advisory Committee along with staff and community agencies. • Help Head Start families by driving or accompanying them to agencies or medical appointments, babysit for their children, help them through intake procedures at agencies, assist them with citizenship applications, bank loans, income tax forms, driver's test, and car inspections. • Serve as translators for non-English speaking parents.	• Write, lay out, or type newsletter. • Call parents to inform them of meetings. • Act as interpreter for non-English speaking parents. • Conduct workshops in areas of expertise. • Recruit families to participate in Head Start.
Work With Individual Parents:	• Meetings with families to identify their needs and plan ways to meet them. • Provision of or referral for appropriate counseling. • Contacts with parents of students with poor attendance patterns.	• Provide training in conducting a meeting, leading a workshop, or participating in a policy group. • Assist in removing obstacles to participation in Head Start, such as lack of transportation or babysitting services. • Provide or refer for education and career counseling.

PROBLEM-SOLVING

Problems in achieving full parent involvement in Head Start arise frequently. Unfortunately, there are no ready-made solutions. What works in one program may fail in another. Those who know the most about a problem and its causes are best qualified to solve it. What follows is a step-by-step process which groups can use to find solutions.

Step 1: Identify and verify the problem.

- What evidence is there that there is a problem? Who sees it as a problem? Is the evidence factual or based on impressions and opinions? How can it be verified?
- How does it affect the program? children? staff? parents? community?
- Is solving the problem a high priority?
- What would happen if it were not resolved?

Step 2: Identify the causes.

- Why does the problem occur?
- Is there more than one reason?
- Are the causes already being addressed by anyone?

Step 3: Brainstorm solutions.

- What has already been tried?
- What has been done by Head Start programs in other communities to solve this problem?
- What has been done by other community agencies (if applicable)?
- What new ways are there?
- What resources exist to solve this problem?
- Who else is interested? How can they be involved?

Step 4: Select solution.

- Is it acceptable to all parties?
- Is it consistent with Head Start guidelines (if applicable)?
- Is it an effective utilization of available resources?
- What specifically will have to be done? by whom?
- Are there circumstances which will inhibit the solution, such as lack of financial resources or lack of skilled manpower, social and cultural deterrents, organizational rivalries, or opposition by special interest groups?

Once the solution has been decided upon, specific responsibilities for carrying out the solution should be assigned, and a timetable set for the completion of these assignments. Progress toward the resolution should be reviewed regularly.

Occasionally the chosen solution does not solve the problem. In this case, it is necessary to reexamine the causes and to explore alternative solutions.

Chapter Five

MAKING DECISIONS WITH PARENTS

> *"Citizen participation is a nuisance. It is costly, it is time consuming, it is frustrating. (Yet) citizen participation — real, genuine, meaningful, total — is probably the only guarantee, frail though it may be, that people will be willing to abide by the terms of today's social contract and have sufficient faith in the system to feel that it is in their interest to wait for the next round of negotiations to press for still better terms within the framework of orderly dialogue and negotiation . . ."*
>
> *— Edgar and Jean Cahn, 1968*

For many parents, their Head Start experience is the first demonstration that society takes them seriously as citizens and as discriminating consumers of community benefits and services. Many come with little knowledge of, or success in, how to make their views known. The resulting inability to influence decisions has made them suspicious, and sometimes passive. Yet experiences in the 1960's demonstrated once again that people will act when the issues are vital to their well-being and when their involvement appears to offer a chance to solve problems. Therefore, from the very first meeting in the recruitment of a new family, when parents are informed of their rights and responsibility in making decisions about the program, and throughout their association with the program, Head Start seeks to involve parents in an educational experience in leadership development and individual participation. As they learn and apply procedures for conducting meetings and determining agendas, as they develop skill in problem-solving and constructive confrontation, as they grasp the implications of their rights and responsibilities, parents develop a confidence and poise which will serve them well as they continue to exercise their roles as citizens protecting and advancing their common interests.

Head Start has delegated responsibility for formal decision-making to three groups: the center committee, the parent policy committee and the parent policy council. Each of the three groups is defined by composition and function; each has specific responsibilities. Because serving on a decision-making body may be a new experience for many, each phase of development and operation may be used as a training device for participants: orienting members, determining goals, preparing an agenda, using parliamentary procedure, developing a plan of action, evaluating results. The parent involvement coordinator offers assistance as the group forms and continues to be available as a resource to them.

HEAD START PARENT DECISION-MAKING GROUPS

Parent decision-making groups are charged with carrying out the responsibilities outlined for them in DHEW guidelines, solving problems, and identifying ways to make the program better for themselves and for their children. They are distinguished from other parent groups by their functions as policy-makers; they are usually task-directed. The membership and leadership are democratically chosen. Staff relate to these groups in an advisory capacity, and upon the request of the group.

Center Committee

24 The center committee is formed at the center level. All parents whose children are currently

enrolled in the center are automatically members. The center committee advises, counsels, and consults with policy committees and councils, makes decisions for the center, and works closely with staff to create a sound child development program. Parents' expectations and the information they provide about their children — what works in reaching them and how they react to the center and staff — are invaluable contributions to the program. These combined with the staff's experience and training can assure balanced and responsible programming for every Head Start center.

The idea of *creating subcommittees* of parents as a method of increasing their involvement in the program merits attention because it offers parents the advantages of small-group interactions, such as greater opportunities for self-expression and support from the group. In addition, since subcommittees can meet at a time and place convenient to the members, parents in rural areas will not be discouraged by long distance travel.

According to the plan, all parents in the center are organized into groups of twelve or fewer. The groups or subcommittees are organized by function, task, component, classrooms, or geographic areas. A teacher, aide, or other staff member acts as an advisor to each group. The subcommittees meet monthly in their homes, church, school, community room or other convenient place. Although following a planned agenda, the members will have frequent opportunities to express their needs and interests as well as their expectations of the program, and to learn what is happening in the classes and policy group meetings.

In addition to the topics discussed during orientation, subcommittee agenda can include such activities as the following:

- Discussing opportunities for volunteer activities and responsibilities of volunteers.
- Inviting staff members to explain their roles in the program.
- Choosing parents to work on component planning committees.
- Reviewing policy council minutes.
- Planning for meetings with staff.
- Discussing criteria for staff recruitment and choosing parents to help interview candidates

Each subcommittee elects a chairperson and any other officers they wish, as well as a representative and alternate to attend center committee meetings. The representative conveys information about the subcommittee's activities and concerns to the center committee and returns with information about policy group decisions and center committee activities. The center committee, in turn, selects members to represent their interests on the parent policy committee or council, and thus are able to influence decisions at the delegate and grantee levels.

Delegate Agency and Grantee Level Policy Groups

The parent policy committee is set up at the delegate agency* level, while the parent policy council is formed at the grantee agency** level. If one agency acts as both grantee and delegate, a single parent policy group is formed.

Both policy groups are composed of parents of children presently enrolled in the agency's Head Start program, as well as representatives of the community. The parent representatives, elected by parents of children currently enrolled, must comprise 51 percent of the group membership. The agency may determine the composition of the remaining 49 percent and the methods to be used for their selection within DHEW guidelines. However, all community representatives must be approved by the elected parent members of the policy group.

Neither staff members nor members of their family may serve on the policy committee or council in a voting capacity. They may attend in a consultative capacity upon the request of the group.

The following chart illustrates the relationships among policy groups and boards of directors. Arrows depict lines of communication.

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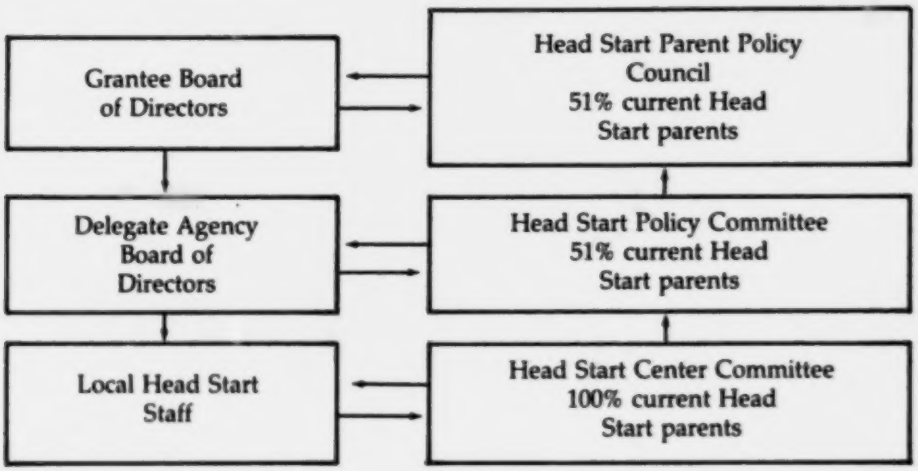
* Delegate agency means the public or private nonprofit organization or agency to which a grantee has delegated the carrying on of all or part of its Head Start Program.

** Grantee means the public or private nonprofit agency which has been granted assistance by ACYF to carry on a Head Start Program.


Grantee Board of Directors
Head Start Parent Policy Council 51% current Head Start parents
Delegate Agency Board of Directors
Head Start Policy Committee 51% current Head Start parents
Local Head Start Staff
Head Start Center Committee 100% current Head Start parents

The designation of authority which parent policy groups have for various areas may be paraphrased as follows.

General responsibility: "Has legal and fiscal responsibility; guides and directs the person or group given responsibility for carrying out the function."

Operating responsibility: "Is responsible for carrying out the function."

Must approve or disapprove: "Must be consulted during decision-making process and must approve before the decision is finalized or action taken."

Must be consulted: "Must be called upon before any decision is made to give advice or information."

May be consulted: "May be called upon for information, advice, or recommendations."

Responsibilities Of Parent Policy Committee

The responsibilities of the parent policy committee are carried out in conjunction with the grantee board, the executive director, and the Head Start directors. The following functions are the minimum responsibilities assigned to the parent policy committee. Members may negotiate for additional functions and a greater share of responsibility, subject to limitations called for by DHEW policy.

- Preview and approve annually the written plan for implementing the performance standards.
- Offer suggestions and ideas for program improvements and request a report on action taken by the administering agency with regard to its recommendations.
- Serve as a link between public and private organizations, the grantee policy council, the delegate agency board of directors, and the community it serves.
- Plan, coordinate and organize agency-wide activities for parents with the assistance of staff.
- Communicate with parents and facilitate their participation in the program.
- Aid in recruiting volunteer services from parents, community resident and community organizations and assist in the mobilization of community resources to meet identified needs.
- Plan, develop the budget for, and administer the parent activity funds. Policy committee shall establish separate bank accounts when they vote to do so.

The policy committee must undertake the following major management functions for which it has some degree of responsibility.

General responsibility:

- Establishing a method of hearing and resolving community complaints about the Head Start program.

Operating responsibility:

- Conducting the self-evaluation of the agency's Head Start program.

Must approve or disapprove

- Current program goals of the Head Start program and the methods for meeting these goals.

- The location of centers and classes.
- Plans for using available community resources.
- Criteria for the selection of children, within applicable laws and DHEW guidelines.
- The composition of the appropriate policy group and the method for setting it up.
- Services provided to Head Start from the delegate agency.
- Head Start personnel policies for the delegate agency (including hiring and firing criteria for Head Start staff, career development plans, and employee grievance procedures).
- Hiring and firing of the Head Start director and staff of the delegate agency.
- Request for funds and proposed work program prior to sending to grantee.
- Major changes in budget and work program while program is in operation.
- All information on the grant application being sent to the policy council for pre-review.

Must be consulted on:

- Identification of child development needs in the area to be served and for ensuring that standards for acquiring space, equipment and supplies are met.

Responsibilities Of Parent Policy Council

The responsibilities of the parent policy council are carried out in conjunction with the board of directors, the executive director, and the Head Start directors. The following functions are the minimum responsibilities delegated to the parent policy council. Members may negotiate for additional functions and a greater share of responsibility, subject to limitations called for by DHEW policy.

- Preview and approve the written plan annually for implementing the performance standards.
- Propose suggestions and ideas for program improvements and request a report on action taken by the administering agency with regard to its recommendations.
- Serve as a link between public and private organizations, the delegate agency policy committees, neighborhood councils, the grantee board of directors and the community it serves.
- Plan, coordinate, and organize agency-wide activities for parents with the assistance of staff.
- Approve the selection of delegate agencies.
- Recruit volunteer services from parents, community residents and community organizations and mobilize community resources to meet identified needs.
- Determine the amount and distribute parent activity funds to policy committees. If there is no policy committee, policy council must plan, develop the budget for, and administer the parent activity fund.
- Assist in communicating with parents and encouraging their participation in the program.

The policy council must undertake the following major management functions for which it has some degree of responsibility.

General responsibility:

- Establishing a method of hearing and resolving community complaints about the Head Start program.

Operating responsibility:

- Conducting a self-evaluation of agency's Head Start program.

Must approve or disapprove:

- Current program goals and ways to meet them.
- Delegate agencies and areas in the community in which Head Start programs will operate.
- Plans for using all available community resources.
- Criteria for the selection of children within applicable laws and HEW guidelines.
- The composition of the appropriate policy group and the method for setting it up.
- What services should be provided to Head Start from the grantee central office and the neighborhood centers.
- Head Start personnel policies for the delegate agency (including establishment of hiring and firing criteria for Head Start staff, career development plans, and employee grievance procedures.)
- Hiring and firing of the Head Start director and staff of the grantee agency.
- Request for funds and proposed work program prior to sending to HEW.
- Major changes in budget and work program while program is in operation.
- Information on the grant application process being sent to HEW for prerview.

Must be consulted on:

- Identifying child development needs in the area to be served and ensuring that standards for acquiring space, equipment and supplies are met.

ASSISTING DECISION-MAKING GROUPS

The parent involvement coordinator can assist decision-making groups at each level in developing or refining basic group skills: setting goals, preparing agenda, developing a plan of action, and evaluating the way they work. In addition, there are specific ways in which he or she can facilitate the work of each group — center committee, policy committee, and policy council.

Developing Group Skills

The parent involvement coordinator can be a valuable resource and guide as parents and community representatives come together as relative strangers and gradually form a cohesive decision-making group. After orienting members to the purpose and degree of authority of the group to which they belong, as well as to their individual responsibilities, the coordinator assists them in electing officers. Then he or she guides the group through the processes of setting goals, preparing agenda, developing a plan of action, and evaluating the way they work.

Setting goals provides direction for the group, sustains interest and participation, and brings a sense of achievement when the group accomplishes what they set out to do. Knowledge of established Head Start goals is necessary before a policy group formulates its own plan to meet them. These policy and program goals can be found in: Head Start program performance standards, state policy council documents, policy group by-laws, and program proposals.

Each program and policy group must develop specific goals and objectives based on the broad national goals. For instance, in order to meet the national goals of parent participation in planning the education program, a policy group might establish the following goals:

- To form an education subcommittee to study the existing plan and make recommendations for improvements, if necessary.
- To designate members to join staff in writing or revising the education plan.
- To review the completed plan.

In a newly formed policy group, it might be wise to start with limited, short-term goals which can be achieved readily, so that the group will be encouraged by its accomplishments. As goals are achieved, the group should be encouraged to set additional and more ambitious ones.

Preparing agenda for meetings is a means of developing parent decision-making and participation skills. The parent involvement coordinator can assist the group members and the chairperson by explaining: the purpose of the agenda and how to prepare them; how agenda can be used to influence the direction and impact of the policy group.

Agenda are designed to give specific information about meetings before they take place — time, place, order and items of business, including committee reports.

Following is a *sample agenda:*

Head Start Policy Council Meeting
November 10, 1978
8:00 p.m.
Community Center

1. Roll call
2. Reading of the minutes of the last meeting
3. Treasurer's report
4. Standing committee reports
   a. Budget Committee
   b. Publicity Committee
   c. Training Committee
5. Special committee reports
   a. Education Committee
   b. Committee to study food services delivery innovations
6. Reading of correspondence
7. Old business
   a. Report on plans for Christmas party
   b. Report on volunteer training
8. New business
   a. Request for report on use of Resource Access Project
   b. Proposal that parent workshop on reading readiness be planned.
9. Unfinished business

Agenda are usually prepared by the policy group chairperson and program director. The chairperson should solicit from group members their concerns, ideas and suggestions and make sure that the agenda provides opportunities for raising these issues. The coordinator should make group members aware of their right to suggest to the chairperson items of business to be included in agenda; procedures for communicating such suggestions should be clearly established.

The agenda for meetings influence the direction and impact of the policy group in several ways. Many persons base their decision about attending the meetings on the agenda; the agenda thus encourage or discourage attendance. The decisions made about what business and reports to include on the agenda are really decisions about what work the group will do, what issues it will address, and what it will ignore. To a great extent, the agenda determine who will be heard and how much time they will be given. When policy group members understand the uses of agenda, they are better prepared to voice their concerns and protect the interests of the parents they represent.

When policy group members have set goals and learned the uses of agenda, they are ready to *develop a plan of action,* to decide what needs to be done, by when, how and where. The plan should include:

- Clear delineation of each task.
- Resources for accomplishing tasks.
- Alternative courses of action.
- Strategies and steps to be taken.
- Timetable for each stage of the plan.

When developing a plan of action, group members need information about: the obstacles they are likely to encounter; government regulations which might affect their work; the operations and attitudes of community agencies through which they must work; successful approaches used in the past to influence decisions and accomplish tasks.

Periodically, the policy group should pause to *evaluate* the way they work together. It might be helpful to ask themselves the following questions:

- Does the group still agree on the goals which they set?
- How many goals have been reached?
- Should additional goals be set?
- Are the agenda for meetings well prepared and do all group members contribute to planning?
- Are meetings conducted within established time limits?
- Is business transacted efficiently?
- Are irrelevant issues or items of business other than those on the agenda introduced at meetings?
- Are work assignments evenly distributed among members?
- Are differences of opinion welcomed in the group?
- Are conflicts and criticism constructively used to explore issues, define problems, and reach solutions?
- Are decisions made only after relevant facts have been obtained, analyzed, and discussed?
- Do members feel that their contributions are valued by others?
- Does the group feel a sense of accomplishment?

After one or two self-evaluations, the group might identify recurring problems and establish a committee to study their causes and suggest solutions.

Helping Groups Meet Their Responsibilities

The degree to which the parent involvement coordinator works with each policy group depends upon the organization of the Head Start program and her function in it. In some cases, the coordinator works with one or more center committees; in other cases, she works directly with the policy committee or policy council. Rather than taking an active role in the policy group, the

coordinator serves as a resource and fosters the leadership and independence of group members. Whenever necessary, she helps each group to meet its responsibilities.

The following chart outlines the responsibilities of the *center committee* and the coordinator's role in facilitating their work.

Center Committee's Responsibility	*Parent Coordinator's Role*
Assists staff with program development in all component areas by relating parents' concerns about their children and explaining particular community needs, customs, values and expectations.	Encourages members to serve on planning committees, matching them according to experience or interest. Gives information about planning committee's responsibilities, tasks, special vocabulary, and members. Helps parent members of planning committee to relay information between planning committee and center committee, center committee and Head Start staff, center committee and community organizations. Shares knowledge of community and its resources and of legislation and policies that affect the committee's operation. Shares knowledge of group processes and organizational and communication skills. Serves as model of leadership skills. Works with staff, if necessary, to facilitate acceptance of parents' contributions to program development.
Works closely with classroom teachers to carry out the daily activities program.	Helps define classroom objectives. Helps clarify expectations between parents and staff. Helps define specific tasks to be performed by parents. Develop ways to answer parents' questions about 1) why certain activities are being conducted, 2) what to look for as observers, and 3) how to make suggestions.
Assists in recruiting and scheduling volunteers for center activities.	Provides training in recruitment techniques and a list of services needed in all component areas, assists in assigning jobs, and supervision.
Plans, conducts, participates in informal and formal activities for all parents using needs assessment.	Assists in developing programs to meet parents' assessed needs as described in Chapter X.
Assists in staff recruitment and screening.	Assists parents or personnel committee in writing job descriptions, publicizing openings, reading resumes, interviewing and selecting new staff.
Elects representatives to policy group; sends directions, questions, requests for activity funds to policy group via representatives; also evaluates grant package.	Provides necessary information before election about functions of policy group, role of center representative, and importance of regular attendance at meetings. After election, works with individual representatives to remind about meetings, help with understanding of parliamentary procedure, agendas, by-laws, budgets, and any necessary vocabulary. Helps representative prepare report to center committee, and clarifies questions and recommendations to be presented to policy board.

The coordinator assists the *policy committee* and *policy council* by assuring their compliance with the following DHEW regulations:

- Voting membership on the policy council or committee is limited to three years;
- Members receive meeting allowances or reimbursements for travel, per diem, and meal and baby sitting expenses incurred because of official policy group meetings (records of disbursements must be kept);
- Every corporate board operating a Head Start program has a policy committee or council as defined by HEW, and that the corporate body and the policy committee/council are not one and the same;
- The policy committee or council is established (with parent and community members) as soon after the beginning of the operating year as possible and in accordance with DHEW guidelines;
- The delegate or grantee agency establishes a written procedure for communication and concurrence between the agency board and the policy committee or council when Head Start policies and procedures are initiated or revised.

Recommendation:

- The delegate or grantee boards have non-voting representation from the policy committee or council to assure coordination with other programs, and conversely, that policy committees or councils have non-voting representation from agency boards.

The coordinator is also available to the chairperson for assistance in making certain that:

- Meetings are scheduled regularly and often enough to reach necessary decisions;
- Members are notified by mail and phone;
- Members attend regularly;
- Minutes and agendas are sent out in advance;
- Reports of the meeting are presented to the Center Committee.

In addition, the parent involvement coordinator assists parents in recruiting and orienting community representatives to the policy committee and council. Community representatives might include former Head Start parents, as well as persons from local government, business, professional organizations, educational institutions, and community groups who are interested in Head Start. Individuals are selected because of skills or contacts which will serve the Head Start program. In addition, people with experience in each of the component areas and people in other professions could be of assistance. For example, an attorney might help with legal work, interpret federal legislation, offer training in consumer law; an architect might advise on the use of center space; an auto mechanic might give classes on care repair and help maintain Head Start vehicles; a bank teller might explain checking accounts; a board member of a local social action agency might advise on community activities and needs; and former Head Start parents might offer ideas and solutions based on their experience. It is important that all people asked to be on the policy group understand the composition of the group, their role in it, and that it is a working group, requiring regular attendance.

Chapter Six

WORKING WITH PARENTS IN THE CLASSROOM

"My mommy's coming to school today," boasted a proud four-year old to his teacher, "and you get to meet her."

A parent's presence in the classroom is a source of excitement and pride to her child. But it is more than that. It is an opportunity for parent and teacher to become better acquainted and to work together to bring out the best in the child. Too, parents who see their child interacting with his peers have more understanding of the similarities among children, as well as the differences. They are able to see how he relates to his playmates — as a leader, a follower, playing with others or alone. In addition, the parents develop realistic expectations for their child as they see just what his abilities are. They may learn more about discipline, as well as teaching techniques, by observing how the teacher organizes activities and deals with problems. The teacher, too, benefits from this contact. She can learn much about the child from his parents and from observing how parent and child relate to one another.

Whether parents participate in the classroom as observers, volunteers, or paid employees, the parent involvement coordinator can smooth their transition from home to the center. By helping parents and staff clarify their roles and responsibilities in the classroom, the coordinator assures that parents will feel at home in Head Start.

PARENT OBSERVERS

Parents who begin active participation by observing their children in the classroom should be made to feel welcome and encouraged to observe whenever possible.

The parent involvement coordinator can help by working with teachers and other education staff members to schedule times for observation and to discuss the parent's role as observers in the classrooms. Decisions must be made about where parents will sit, whether or not they should ask questions during the observation, and if they will be asked to participate in any way.

Before observing, parents will need explanations of what activities they will see, reasons for any classroom rules they might not understand, and basic observation techniques. After observing, parents should be given an opportunity to discuss what they have seen with the teacher and the parent coordinator.

PARENT VOLUNTEERS

Organizing volunteer services in component areas is a complicated task; thorough and thoughtful planning is required. Plans should include assessing the needs of the Head Start program, identifying jobs for volunteers*, preparing children and parents for using the services of volunteers, and scheduling volunteer activities.

Before inviting parents to volunteer, the coordinator and staff should answer the following questions. What jobs need to be done? What activities are most suitable for volunteers? Will volunteers be accepted by all staff members? What type of orientation and training would be

* See Chapter Four for ideas for volunteer activities in each component.

necessary and how could it be provided? What activities do parents feel most suited for? What problems might develop? Candid, frank opinions should be encouraged and discussed before specific plans are made.

Volunteers are entitled to every consideration given to paid personnel. Volunteers wish to be useful, to perform worthwhile services appropriate to their abilities, to be respected, and to be recognized for their particular contributions. A volunteer should be given as much responsibility as he or she can handle. Volunteers should supplement and extend the services already provided by paid personnel. If the volunteer's role is well-defined, staff members will know what to expect and will have fewer problems relating to volunteers.

Writing a job description and title for each volunteer assignment prevents confusion.* It also helps the volunteer to obtain Civil Service recognition or other acceptance of his or her volunteer work as credit toward paid employment. Suggestions for volunteers' titles include medical records clerk, health education aide, public relations assistant, teaching assistant, community liaison, and program planner.

Coordinators should match parents with jobs according to their interests and abilities. They should provide orientation and training of volunteers with the help of staff members. Volunteers should be scheduled for activities during times when the coordinator or another staff member is available to supervise them. A designated staff member must be responsible for supervising volunteers and solving problems that may occur. Continued supervision on the job, together with periodic individual conferences, will help the parent volunteer become accustomed to his or her assignment, avoid pitfalls, develop abilities, and eventually accept greater responsibility.

An orientation and training session must be provided for volunteers. Participation in role playing could be helpful if volunteers are not accustomed to the position which they are going to fill. Role playing can be an effective way to reinforce skills and increase self-confidence among the participants. In addition, volunteers should be given a handbook with a schedule of the day's activities, names of the Head Start staff and children they'll be working with, and a sample menu. They should also be familiar with basic Head Start policies and procedures. Accurate records should be kept for volunteers, including information about their skills, job assignments, schedules, and a log of hours worked. Records of volunteer in-kind contributions must also be kept.

Periodically volunteers should evaluate themselves as well as the volunteer program. The staff, too, should have opportunities to evaluate volunteers and the program.

The success of the volunteer program depends on maintaining the interest and enthusiasm of parents. This can be done by satisfying their needs for new experiences, acceptance, and recognition. As the volunteers grow with the job, they should have opportunities for assuming additional responsibilities and for putting some of their own ideas into practice. If the director and staff truly support and appreciate the volunteer program, the parent will feel accepted. Service awards contribute to the volunteer's sense of recognition, but frequent words of approval from the staff members can do even more. The volunteers' greatest satisfaction will stem from their knowledge that they are performing a real service to the program and to the people it serves.

PARENT EMPLOYEES

Parents of children in Head Start are given priority for employment in positions for which they qualify. Usually, recruitment begins when a position is first resigned or vacated. Job vacancies should be posted in the center, the newsletter, and in locations in the community such as churches, schools, clinics and stores. Advertising in the newpaper also helps to attract a wide range of applicants.

The parent involvement coordinator can help in recruiting by soliciting applications from qualified parents and encouraging those who express interest to apply.

Pre-service Training

When parents assume paid positions in Head Start, pre-service training provides a necessary orientation to the program and their roles in it. All new Head Start employees need information

* See sample job description in Chapter Two.

on the goals, structure and policies of Head Start; parent employees in particular can benefit from information about support services available through Head Start and in the community.

New employees need detailed information about their responsibilities and their relationship to others. Tips on good communications among staff and procedures for resolving problems should be included in preservice training.

Inservice Training

Training conducted at intervals throughout the year provides opportunities for the staff to refine their skills and learn new ones. The content of each training session will depend on the current needs of the program. Possible topics include: policy changes, communication skills, techniques for working with children with special needs, issues in parent involvement. Enough time should be allotted so that staff members can exchange ideas, make suggestions, and evaluate the session.

Career Development

Upward mobility has always been a Head Start goal for employees. Within the program, Head Start offers opportunities for advancement from step to step and level to level. As employees master their jobs and develop new skills, they should be given more responsibility and increased compensation. Whenever possible, they should be encouraged to prepare for and obtain positions at a higher level within the organization. In addition, Head Start encourages parents and other employees to use skills developed in Head Start to gain employment in other organizations where greater advancement is possible. Employees should be encouraged to take advantage of all training and education opportunities, and to continually raise their expectations of what they might do.

Evaluation

In order to help staff members assess their strengths and weaknesses in the job and to plan for career advancement, regular evaluations of their performance should be conducted. Both the employee and supervisor should assess the employee's performance using the same criteria. Then, they can discuss his or her performance and make plans for improving it and for receiving training and advancing to the next level.

Chapter Seven

PROMOTING PARENT ACTIVITIES

"She has been recently separated from her husband. She has a twelve-year-old who is having problems in school. She has a very sick two-year-old. She is a Head Start mother. She is involved with her own problems yet she wants to be involved in Head Start."

Head Start parents bring to the program a degree of strength, stamina and resilience seldom required of their more affluent peers. They often must cope with pressures far greater than those of dealing with an active preschooler. Limited income, sporadic employment, poor housing and personal problems add to everyday stress. Consequently, Head Start seeks to fortify parents and build on their strengths by offering resources and support to draw upon. Parents are invited to design activities and experiences that will nourish and refresh them. The parent involvement coordinator helps parents assess their needs and plan programs to meet them.

ASSESSING NEEDS

Assessing needs begins with understanding. Understanding the vast range of human needs. Understanding parents — their problems as well as their expectations. The parent involvement coordinator must be perceptive, hearing not only what parents are saying, but also what they mean. Further, the coordinator must realize that what parents view as their needs may differ from the coordinator or staff's perception of what these are. This may be difficult for there is often a tendency to project one's feelings onto others. To effectively involve parents in the program, the coordinator must be certain that the basic needs of parents have been satisfied and must help them solve any individual problem which might preclude their participation. After this is accomplished, the coordinator should encourage parents to openly explore what type of program would best suit them. With this knowledge, the coordinator will be more adept at helping parents design a program that will not only meet their interest and needs, but also keep them actively involved.

Understanding Hierarchy of Human Needs

All people have basic needs which are necessary for survival. But other needs must be satisfied too in order for people to feel good about themselves. A prominent psychologist, A.N. Maslow, has devised a graded system or hierarchy of human needs to help people understand which needs have to be met first. According to Maslow, people's most basic needs are physiological. Next, in order of importance, are safety needs, social needs, self-esteem needs, and finally self-fulfillment needs.

Although, to some extent, people constantly try to satisfy all of their needs, they devote most of their energy to the level of yet unsatisfied needs in the hierarchy. As needs at one level are satisfied, the individual is freed to turn his attention and energy to meeting those at the next level.

Physiological needs include those that a human body must meet in order to stay alive and to function adequately — food, clothing, and shelter. People take these necessities for granted unless they are not satisfied.

After physiological needs are satisfied, safety issues take precedence. People need guarantees that they will be protected from potential danger, treated fairly, and that they will not be deprived of something that is reasonably theirs. Laws, job contracts, and union agreements express these guarantees.

With the fulfillment of safety needs, a person's social requirements become important to him — cultivating friendships, pursuing recreational activities, and becoming identified as a member of a group. Churches, clubs, organizations and institutions are means of personal satisfaction.

When all other needs are adequately satisfied, a person focuses on fulfilling his potential. By making good use of his abilities and skills, a person has a sense of accomplishment which enhances his self-image and increases his self-confidence.

This simplified version of Maslow's heirarchy is but one explanation of what motivates people to behave as they do. There are many cases in everyday life when people pay more attention to higher level needs than to basic ones, or work to satisfy many levels of needs simultaneously.

PARENTS' NEEDS AND WAYS TO MEET THEM

Parent's Needs	How Head Start Helps	Community Resources*
1. Physiological needs: food, clothing, shelter, health	1. Identifies resources for parents, makes referrals and follow-up.	1. Public assistance; aid to dependent children; public housing; food programs; health clinics; alcohol and drug abuse programs, weight control programs, Planned Parenthood.
2. Safety needs: job security, environmental safety, civil rights	2. Identifies resources, makes referrals, and educates parents about rights and satisfaction of grievances.	2. Civil laws, including anti-discrimination, housing, consumer, and health legislation; legal aid; employment training; social security benefits; union and job contracts.
3. Social needs: affection, friendship, family ties, group membership	3. Provides opportunities for socializing and recreation, developing parenting skills, planning and participating in center activities.	3. Churches; neighborhood community organizations; mental health programs, including individual, family, and group counseling; Parents Without Partners; senior citizens centers.
4. Esteem needs: self confidence, independence, competency, knowledge, recognition, appreciation, respect	4. Provide opportunities for participating in policy groups and training for decision-making and participation in civic activities; recognize contributions, skills, and services of parents; refer to community resources for skills and career development, adult education.	4. Adult education programs, church and community organizations, political and civic groups, volunteer services.
5. Self-fulfillment needs: development of personal abilities, skills, creativity.	5. In addition to above, provide opportunity for unique individual parent contributions and refer to community resources for individual development.	5. In addition to above, art and cultural activities, groups promoting human growth and potential.

* See appendix for additional resources and materials

Needs of Parents In General

"Parents Are People Too," goes the song title from *Free To Be*, and so they, as people, have all the needs described above. But as parents with children dependent on them, they may experience their needs more intensely and devote more energy to fulfilling them. Parents initially will be preoccupied with obtaining food, clothing, and shelter for their children as well as themselves. When these basics are met, they will be concerned with their family's security. However, if their own needs are not satisfied, parents will have little desire or energy to satisfy the higher-level needs of themselves or their children.

Parents tend to put their children first, even if this means depriving themselves of necessities. But if parents' own needs, both basic and higher, are not satisfied, it will be difficult for them to respond to the higher level needs of their children. Parents must be happy with themselves in order to be effective parents. Unhappy, tired, lonely parents have little to offer their children. Consequently, any program aiming to help parents help their children must first help parents help themselves. For this reason, the Head Start program provides opportunities for parents to satisfy their own needs at many levels.

Being a parent carries its own set of worries and considerations, and parents might need special reassurances. All parents have children that sometimes cry, scream, fight, or refuse to eat. It is reassuring for parents to know that other parents share their problems — that all children at some time react in similar ways. All parents periodically question whether or not they are raising their children "correctly." Parents need reassurance that they are doing a good job. Parents, too, need time to themselves, alone and socially, for rest and relaxation. Most parents infrequently take this time and, when they do, they often feel guilty. Parents need to know that this time alone is important for themselves and enhances their relationships with their children.

The parent coordinator and other social services staff can help parents identify and assess or rank their needs in order of importance. Identifying and assessing needs is a gradual process, subject to continual revision. Parents' needs may change as they become more aware of program services and their roles as prime educators of their children. In the following chart, parents' needs, as described by Maslow, are listed with suggestions of ways in which Head Start can help; some community resources for meeting needs are identified.

Parents With Special Needs

Because of their living situations, roles, ages, or problems, some parents may have special needs. These parents should know that the coordinator is aware of how this may affect their daily living and coping and that the coordinator is willing to discuss what they can do together to relieve some of the pressures. In addition to ongoing and informal support, the name and phone number of a person at an appropriate agency, an informal discussion with other parents faced with similar problems, and some groundwork on job leads are ways a coordinator can offer help to a parent.

Groups of parents with similar needs find valuable resources in each other, and a coordinator who can provide a place to meet, babysitting and transportation services has done much toward helping parents to help themselves. Each center may have:

- *Working parents* who need to talk through their ambivalence about being out of the home, to share ideas and resources on day care, to role-play job interviews, to practice resume-writing, to be assured that quality of time with children counts more than quantity.
- *Migrant parents* who need to arrange for medical and dental examinations for every member of their family, to find recreation for their older children, to have access to a parent lounge where they can relax over a cup of coffee at the end of the day.
- *Single parents* who need to find someone they respect who will listen to their feelings about raising a child alone, to work out cooperative babysitting and transportation arrangements, to have social outlets and contacts, to receive accurate information about child support, custody, and credit.
- *Parents of children with special needs* who need to discuss their own feelings about their child's obstacles and frustrations, to have concrete information about local health, educational, and counseling resources, to have ready access to professionals who can answer questions about childrens' special needs and how to cope with them.

- *Parents with health problems* who need to find self-help groups concerned with alcoholism, drug abuse or obesity, to file applications for medical insurance and health care programs, to enroll in clinics that can provide ongoing care.
- *Non-English speaking parents* who need to know where courses in English are being offered, to know that their own culture and customs are respected and prized, to meet other members of their ethnic community and participate in activities and traditions meaningful to them.
- *Teen-aged parents* who need to have ongoing support from adults and peers through discussion groups, to find reliable day care services, to receive accurate information about contraception and the responsibilities of parenting.
- *Pregnant mothers* who need to have access to regular health care, to be familiar with community services dealing with nutrition, childbirth, breastfeeding and birth control, and to discuss problem pregnancies.
- *Foster parents* who need to know they are not alone in handling the special needs of the children charged to them, to receive coordinated assistance from community agencies, to have outlets for recreation and relaxation with other adults in the program.
- *Adoptive parents* who need to have opportunities to discuss how and when to tell their children they are adopted, to find ways to help siblings accept an adopted child, to have support groups of other adoptive parents, to find financial assistance, if necessary.
- *Grandparents* who may need to receive help with transportation, to be encouraged to seek out activities for themselves, to find employment at the center, to vent feelings and discuss problems about raising grandchildren.

Techniques For Assessing Needs

Individual needs assessment can be a natural, informal, ongoing process throughout the year as the coordinator and staff members respond to parents' questions and discuss problems. Alert staff members become aware of the many subtle ways parents express their needs, and seize the moment to reinforce a positive step a parent has taken, or to suggest that they build the next parent workshop around a behavior problem a parent is worried about.

More formal needs assessment begins with the recruitment process, when parents first learn about the Head Start program and begin exploring how it might help their own families. The social services staff plays a major role in helping parents define their individual needs and those of their families during these initial interviews and throughout the year. The parent coodinator, working closely with the social services director, is primarily responsible for assisting parents to assess needs that can be met through the parent involvement program. Staff members interview parents at home or in the center to determine their needs and priorities. Questionnaires are useful guides to the interviewer. They outline what the coordinator needs to know about the parents' interests and expectations. This enables parents and staff to develop an individualized program to suit the cultural and ethnic backgrounds of the family. Parent involvement coordinators have found it useful to tabulate the results and share them with parents.

Parents assess group needs at informal social gatherings, regular meetings, or committee and council meetings. They do so in order to: clarify what they want for themselves, their children, or the program; set priorities so they can proceed in an organized fashion; act in the most direct way to accomplish their goals.

The parent involvement coordinator or group leader can assist by triggering a discussion and summarizing results. Following are some "trigger devices" for beginning a needs assessment session:

- On a chart, list needs that parents have expressed in previous years.
- Distribute a brief needs assessment questionnaire and dicusss it together at the same meeting.
- Brainstorm a list of needs parents might have — accept and record all ideas; discuss ideas only when the list is completed.

During the discussion period, parents evaluate the needs expressed, and rank them in order of importance to the group. A list of needs emerges. Revisions and reassessments of items in the list should be made throughout the year.

DEVELOPING A PARENT EDUCATION PLAN

The annual parent education plan, a part of the parent involvement plan, is a schedule of activities, workshops, lectures, and discussions which the parents have arranged to answer questions, to improve their skills, and to be with each other for leisure and recreation.

Responsibility for developing the parent education plan rests with the parents, and all parents are invited to participate in the planning session. The parent involvement coordinator lays the groundwork, weeks before the meeting, with a phone call to every parent, each time referring to an interest or problem they revealed through the questionnaire or conversation they had together. The coordinator explains that parents will be meeting to decide how to follow through on interests and concerns they all have, and therefore every parent's input is needed. The coordinator should ask whether the parent will be needing transportation or babysitting services. The following week, one week before the meeting date, invitations or reminders should be sent to the home. Meanwhile, posters and notices should be posted throughout the center as daily reminders to parents of the forthcoming planning session. Invitations and notices should inform parents of the time, place, and purpose of the meeting. If babysitting, transportation, and refreshments are to be provided that information should be included in the notice. At the meeting participants may be involved in some warming-up activities; perhaps refreshments could be available from the beginning and placed on tables so parents can eat and plan at the same time.

Content Of Plan

The content of the parent plan responds directly to the expressed needs of parents. Parent education and training which is required to be offered in each component to meet the Head Start performance standards should be incorporated as much as possible into the concerns expressed by parents, but should not be forced into the program to the exclusion of information parents request. Content can be broken down into three areas: 1) parent education, to add to parents' knowledge and skills; 2) training activities, to increase their understanding of their roles and functions in Head Start; and 3) activities to give parents an opportunity to pursue their own interests. Following are some suggested topics for *parent education*.

- Child growth and development:
  - Your child: infant to age five
  - the school age child
  - sex education
  - using community youth services
  - behavior management
  - discipline and setting limits
  - nutrition needs of young children
  - sibling rivalry
- The parent as educator:
  - trips to take
  - games to make and play
  - toys to buy and make
  - using home materials
  - how to help in school
  - importance of TV
  - songs, nursery rhymes and stories
  - the value of play
  - early stimulation for infants
- Consumer education:
  - stretching the food dollar
  - consumer resources
  - installment buying, loans, checking and savings accounts, credit cards
  - do-it-yourself home repairs
  - income tax preparation
- How to get a job:
  - reading want ads, writing a resume, and going for an interview
  - good grooming
  - literacy and basic education
  - civil service test preparation
  - high school equivalency diploma
  - physical fitness
  - English as a second language
- Family life:
  - family planning
  - sex education
  - dealing with divorce and death
  - handling stress
  - family counseling services

Listed below are areas in which parents might need *training*.

- Policy groups:
  policy-making procedures
  parliamentary procedure
  duties of officers
  Head Start terminology
  guidelines and policies
  agenda
  budgetary planning
  developing program proposals
- Component planning committees:
  terminology
  group decision-making
  curriculum planning
- Classroom participation:
  observation techniques
  role of volunteers
  skills in working with children
- Staff recruitment:
  guidelines for hiring
  interviewing techniques

Suggested below are *activities* which might interest parents:

- Create a new playground using old tires, inner tubes, ropes, boats, hoses collected by parents.
- Workshop on developing positive ethnic identity.
- Setting up lending library for toys, books, records and dress-up kits (shopping bags with various old clothes and props).
- Sessions on hair-cutting and styling.
- Sewing classes for clothes, home furnishings, curtains for the school, perhaps culminating in a fashion show. Try sewing machine dealers for instructors and renting or borrowing machines. Get fabric remnants from shops. Parents can swap patterns or set up a pattern file.
- Home management and repair — invite dry cleaners to talk about spot removal, see if a local hardware store offers classes in home repair, have parents demonstrate use of tools for carpentry, plumbing or electrical repair.
- Monitoring supermarket pricing, encouraging stores to stock certain items or boycott others.
- Car repair — have parent or local service station demonstrate basic maintenance.
- Spanish lessons for non-Spanish speaking parents.
- Gardening — group plot at center, plant sales, maybe of seedlings planted by parents.
- Cooking classes, food tasting party, study of can labels, publish cookbook, make dinner with new, nutritious foods.
- Hobby demonstration and display.
- Fire safety — ask local firemen to talk about fire prevention.
- Crafts classes, taught by parent, or someone from a local craft shop.
- "Everything You've Always Wanted To Know . . . " Fairs with specialists sitting behind each booth and relevant materials available: pediatricians, cancer detection personnel, blood pressure technicians, food stamp representatives, scholarship officers from local colleges and universities, psychologists, etc.
- Parent singing group led by parent who plays instrument. Group can perform at center meetings and in community.
- Exercise classes led by parent or person from community center.
- Family pot-luck suppers.
- Couples dinner-dance in school or community center.
- Bowling, basketball, or swimming teams.
- Demonstration of how to can and freeze fresh foods.
- Quilting bees, knitting and crocheting classes.
- Square dance or hay ride.
- Flower-arranging workshop using fresh or dried flowers.

Once parents have determined their priorities, they can draw on a wide range of resources for ideas, expertise and materials. The Head Start staff includes persons competent in the areas of child development, early childhood education, physical and mental health, nutrition, and social services. Within the center itself, many kinds of materials and equipment are available. In addition, staff members have a wealth of knowledge of resources outside the center — associations, agencies, institutions, companies and individuals who can offer information and assistance in many areas. (A partial list of resources is included in the appendix). Parents themselves have many skills and talents that can be drawn upon in developing programs.

Methods And Materials

Most adults think of themselves as responsible, independent, and self-directed people, able to make their own decisions and run their own lives. They resent being "taught" and treated like children. They can benefit, however, from opportunities to learn what they want to know in a way that is comfortable for them. Because adults learn best when a variety of teaching methods are employed, the parent education plan should be a balance of large and small group activities, center and home-based meetings, formal and non-formal formats, and working and playing situations. Arenas for learning can be meetings, small group discussions, readings, projects, guided observations, workshops, lectures, field-trips, demonstrations, fairs, and picnics.

Opportunities to use many kinds of materials also stimulate parents' interests. Some materials are books, pamphlets, records, slides, films, filmstrips, art materials, craft and sewing supplies. Anything which invites parents to "jump in and get their feet wet" will make it easier for parents to get involved.

Scheduling Activities

Parent activities should be scheduled to allow for continuity in learning and variety in types of activities. Business meetings and social activities should take place regularly throughout the year.

Specific topics in parent education or skill development can be scheduled for several consecutive sessions over a short period of time. Policy groups and subcommittees may develop their own schedules. A schedule of regular meetings and activities should be made for the whole year, with allowances for later scheduling of specific activities. All activities should be scheduled to provide parents at least two weeks advance notice.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR PARENT ACTIVITIES

Funds for parent activities must be allocated through the regular Head Start grant or contract. Policy committees must anticipate such needs when developing program proposals and include parent activity funds to cover the cost of parent-sponsored activities.

While Head Start may have funds available for parent activities, in most instances it will be necessary to supplement those funds. Activities such as bake sales, car washes, garage sales, yard sales, and white elephant sales are ways to raise money. Additionally, these activities are positive ways of unifying parents as they work together for their common goals. Parent involvement may begin with a fund-raising activity and grow from there to participation in other levels of the program.

Parents have responsibilities for managing the parent activity fund in accordance with agency and Head Start policies. The monies in this fund may be put toward a project that will bring in additional funds:

- to buy items that will enhance the quality of the program, if there are no other funds budgeted for this purpose;
- to develop materials to increase parent interest and involvement in the program;
- for emergency loans;
- for parent education activities, professional instructors, or fees for classes;
- to gather, disseminate and publish materials on other state, federal, or local programs;
- as a cash contribution to the total Head Start program;
- the funds may not be used for advertising, for payment to staff, or for salaries to any individuals.

Grantee and policy groups shall determine the amount for parent activity funds each year. Funds must be maintained, used, and administered by parent policy groups; funds are accountable for an annual audit; these funds are in addition to amounts specified in the Head Start budget for parent travel training, participation in special organizations and policy meetings and for babysitting.

The responsibility for establishing program activities and budget lies at two levels. The parent policy council is responsible for establishing program plans, priorities and activities on a delegate agency or county-wide basis. The center committee is responsible for establishing plans, priorities, activities and budget at the local level.

Chapter Eight

SUPPORTING PARENTS AS PRIME EDUCATORS OF THEIR CHILDREN

"I feel more secure within myself. I feel I am a better parent."
. . . a Head Start parent.

Parental involvement in the education of children extends beyond participation in class-oriented activities to the reinforcement of developmental gains in the home. Interactions between parent and child in the home are important to the child's growth and development. Most parents are eager to participate in the classroom activities and experiences of their children's world and to reinforce these experiences at home. However, many parents are uncertain about the kinds of at-home activities which will support educational growth and development and are doubtful of their ability to function in the role of educator. Supportive activities should include both home and center-based experiences. Program objectives and parent expectations should be clarified in an informal manner before the program begins, so that both parents and staff know what they want to achieve and can then work together toward that end.

THE PARENT'S ROLE IN CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Parent involvement is not just participation in the activities, events, and programs which make up a child's world. Involvement includes understanding a child well enough to know what certain moods mean, how the child deals with difficult situations, what soothes, what agitates. Involvement includes valuing the child enough as an individual to work at building a mutually satisfying relationship. Real involvement requires a total commitment.

Parents are the most important people in a child's life. Parents have been involved in their children's education for years. They have provided the cultural foundation and value system around which the child's socialization process centers. It is ironic that there should be any doubt about the ability of parents to work with their own children at home. What parents frequently need is assistance in: identifying the objectives which they want to attain with their children; determining the needs which they perceive for themselves and their children; appraising the wealth of skill and talent which they possess and use every day when interacting with their children; and recognizing their responsibilities as prime educators of their children. Volumes of research have demonstrated that home circumstances consistently influence a child's behavior. The positive or negative effects of such influence depend, in part, on the frequency of child-parent interactions which take place in the home, as well as the focus of those interactions. While many of the effects of variables in the home environment are not readily apparent in terms of child development outcomes, there is some evidence that structured and direct efforts of parents to enhance the development of their children can produce positive results. Parent involvement at home can focus on the following objectives:

- An increased awareness by parents of their child's behavior and their own influence on the child.
- A more systematic focus on parent-child interaction and intellectual activities at home.
- An increased level of verbal interaction between parents and children.
- An increase in parent responsiveness to children.

SUPPORTING PARENTS AT HOME

From its beginnings, Head Start has been aware of the need to consider complete entities when planning for early childhood education — the whole child, the whole program, the whole family, the whole community — and the interdependence of these entities on one another. Therefore, the Head Start concept of parent involvement at home also encompasses more than simple parent-child relationships. It includes the entire network of relationships, expectations, behaviors and values which create the home environment.

The coordinator's efforts to support parents as they work with their children at home can have far-reaching implications, and should be planned with care and concern.

Helping Parents Achieve Their Objectives

The coordinator can assist parents in achieving their own at-home objectives in four basic ways:

- Identify what they want for their children and think about the kinds of activities which will achieve these objectives.
- Determine their own needs and those of their children in relation to engaging in developmental activities at home.
- Become more aware of the parenting skills which they already possess and use and improve their skills in those areas of parenting where they feel less capable.
- Recognize that, as the primary educators of their children, they have a definite responsibility to function in that role and cannot shift the entire obligation to the school.

Parents and staff have much to learn from one another and should work toward establishing a mutually supportive relationship built on trust and respect. Once such a relationship is established, the coordinator can initiate activities which will support parents as they work with their children at home.

Making Home Visits

Home visits are one way to involve and reinforce parents in their role as prime educators of their children. Staff are required to make home visits at least three times a year with parents' consent, of course. In the home setting, staff can gain insight into the child's environment and can enlist the parents' cooperation in the child's educational process. Slowly and spontaneously, alternatives to and expansions of present behaviors can be suggested, explained, modeled, and supported.

The parent involvement coordinator who has taken the time to plan each home visit she makes — what the visit is to accomplish, what materials will be needed, what the parent would like to talk about, and what amount of time is to be spent at the home — will be demonstrating that the parents' time and priorities are indeed respected.

Following are some guidelines for planning and making home visits.

Planning the Visit

- Arrange a mutually convenient time for the visit with the parents.
- Suggest dates when you will be in the neighborhood if a parent is undecided as to the date.
- Try to plan the visit with the parent around mutual interests. Otherwise, parents may feel that the home visit is an invasion of their privacy or is associated with a negative situation at the center.
- If parents are unavailable at the time you make the visit, leave a note saying you will arrange with them to come another time.
- Review the child's record. Give parents specific examples of the strengths and areas in which he needs additional experiences.

Making the Visit

- Speak naturally and be yourself.
- Direct your attention to the parent.
- Stress that the parent is the important person.
- Don't be afraid to admit when you have made a mistake or don't have information.

- Discuss the purpose and the procedure of the planned activity.
- Keep your explanations short; explain in steps and demonstrate as you go along.
- After you have explained or demonstrated a skill or activity, let the parent take over.
- When parent and child are interacting, or parent is trying to get the child's attention, don't interrupt.
- Let the parent attend to the child's needs, unless you are asked to do so.
- Use praise and encouragement cautiously, not mechanically or in ways that will interrupt the flow of parent-child interaction.
- If you have been working on a specific parenting skill or behavior and the parent uses it, let the parent know you observed it and how it worked.
- Do not phrase a question in such a way that the parent will answer "yes" or "no", unless you are willing to accept that.
- Use parent-child activities to discuss desirable parenting behaviors.

SUPPORTING PARENTS THROUGH CENTER ACTIVITIES

Activities and resources designed for parents in the Head Start center can serve to support parents as prime educators of their children. The creation of a parent lounge in the center symbolizes the program's commitment to parents and provides a physical setting for parent activities. A newsletter, which might already be part of an on-going communications system, can be used to support and promote parenting skills. In addition, workshops designed to help parents work with their children at home can be incorporated into the parent education plan.

Creating a Parent Lounge

The establishment of a parent lounge requires a degree of planning for the parent involvement coordinator. However, once the project is started and publicized, contributions of time and materials will come from several sources.

To start, the parent involvement coordinator will need to acquire space in the Head Start center. Once the space is available, fliers can be sent home and to businesses in the community encouraging the donation of furniture, toys, books, magazines, machines and other items which will contribute to the appearance, comfort and convenience of the lounge.

Following are some ideas for enhancing the parent lounge:

- *Machines* such as sewing machines, typewriters, washer/dryer combinations, adding and copying machines would be welcomed by parents. These items are tax deductible and may be donated by the community.
- An *information board* containing current information about activities, events, and programs of interest to parents and services available to families in the center and the community.
- A *suggestion box* for parent input to center programs and activities.
- A *lending library* for books, magazines, games and toys.
- A *swap barrel* for articles of clothing, shoes and boots.
- A *resource file* containing lists of parents' and staff's special skills, talents and experiences. Parents and staff can tap each other as resource persons for classroom and parent involvement activities.
- *Furniture* such as sofa, chairs, tables, cribs, or a playpen.

Using the Newsletter for Parents

A newsletter written, produced and distributed by parents, for parents, can be used to further reinforce the concept that parents are important as people. In addition to information which is sent home concerning center activities focused on the Head Start classroom and the child, the newsletter can contain information on events and activities of special interest to parents.

A schedule of the parent involvement program activities for the coming month included in the newsletter would allow parents to plan ahead for attendance at meetings and workshops in which they are interested.

The newsletter can also contain a section on at-home activities, including suggestions for art projects, simple cooking recipes, skill-building games, family outings and other whole-family activities.

In addition, an editorial section of the newsletter can be used to share experiences parents have had with their children at home.

Conducting Workshops in Parenting Skills

Workshops, carefully planned and designed around expressed parent interests, represent an excellent vehicle for assisting parents to enhance both their parenting and teaching skills. In order to interact most effectively with their children at home, parents need to examine the skills which they already possess, determine areas where improvement is needed and identify additional skills which they would like to acquire.

An initial workshop could be designed to assist parents in assessing their skills and setting goals. A simple form with a few basic questions could be completed by each parent and then discussed as a group. The form might be similar to the one which follows. Working together, the parent coordinator and parent group could then develop a master list of areas of interest in improvement and acquiring new knowledge. From this master list the parent coordinator could develop a list of workshop topics and a tentative schedule for the year.

By developing the schedule of workshops in this way, the parent coordinator can feel secure in the knowledge that the workshops to be offered will be of interest to the parents and will assist them in fulfilling their roles as prime educators of their children. Head Start staff, community members and parents can all serve as resources for planning and conducting the workshops.

Many programs are now using *Exploring Parenting*, a parent education program specifically designed for Head Start. It provides structured situations in which parents can discuss common concerns and share experiences and ideas. After appropriate training, parents and staff find it easy to lead the parent groups using the materials. Both materials and training may be requested from the Head Start Regional Offices.

PARENTING ASSESSMENT FORM

A. What things do you do best as a parent?

B. In what areas do you feel you need to improve?

C. What new skills and/or knowledge do you think would help you to be a better parent and to work more effectively with your children at home?

Chapter Nine

WRITING A PARENT INVOLVEMENT PLAN

"How do I know what I think, until I see what I've written?"
— W. H. Auden

At the beginning of each year, parent involvement personnel, parents, and staff come together to design a plan of action for integrating parents into every aspect of the Head Start program. The planning process itself invites parents and staff into an ongoing partnership. As they discuss the implications of each objective of the program, they begin to understand what each seeks for the children and adults who make up their Head Start community. As they narrow down activities and tasks which will fulfill these objectives, they discover each other's skills, strengths, and interests. As they set timetables and assume responsibility for carrying out the plan, they begin to invest their time and energy in Head Start.

Often parent involvement plans are developed at the delegate or grantee level; each center then determines specific ways to put them into effect. In some cases, the center initiates its own plan. Usually it is the parent involvement coordinator who has responsibility for making certain that a comprehensive plan is written by parents and staff annually. In doing so, the following must be considered:

- Content - what to include in the plan.
- Form - method of arranging detail.
- Planning process - who will be involved and how it should be done.

CONTENT OF THE PLAN

The content of the parent involvement plan must outline, in detail, the ways in which staff and parents will implement the parent participation policies set forth in "The Parents" (OCD Transmittal Notice 70.2) and in the Head Start Performance Standards.

Because the planners must be familiar with all objectives and performance standards relating to parents, this section provides summaries of those of the parent involvement component as well as those in the education, health, and social services components.

Parent Involvement Component

The parent involvement component has three primary objectives. The first is to provide a planned program of experiences and activities which support and enhance the role of parents as the principle influence on their child's education and development. The second is to provide a program that recognizes parents as responsible guardians and prime educators of their children as well as contributors to the Head Start program and their communities. The third objective is to provide opportunities for parents to participate in decision-making, in the classroom, in adult activities which they have developed, and in working with their own children at home in connection with the Head Start staff.

To meet the performance standards the Head Start program must develop a plan for parent participation which enhances the development of parenting skills and provides for communications among program management, staff, and parents. In addition, the program must establish procedures and provide support which will enable parents and area residents to influence the character and operation of programs affecting their interests and to obtain assistance from public and private sources.

In particular, the plan must involve parents in the following:

- Experiences and activities which lead to enhancing the development of their skills, self-confidence, and sense of independence in fostering an environment in which their children can develop to their full potential.
- Experiences in child growth and development which will strengthen their role as the primary influence in their children's lives.
- Ways of providing educational and developmental activities for children in the home and community.
- Health, mental health, dental and nutritional education.
- Identification and use of family and community resources to meet the basic life support needs of the family.
- Meeting with Head Start teachers and other appropriate staff for discussion and assessment of their children's individual needs and progress.

The communications system required by the performance standards must provide two-way communication between staff and parents and the provision of information to members of policy groups.

Parent-staff communications must be carried out on a regular basis throughout the program year, providing information about the program and its services, program activities for children, policy groups, and resources within the program and the community. Communications must be designed and carried out in a way which reaches parents and staff effectively. Policy groups, staff, and parents must participate in the planning and development of the communications system used.

Parent Involvement in Education Services

The teaching staff should involve parents in the educational activities of the program to enhance their role as the principal influence on their child's education and development. They assist parents in increasing their knowledge, understanding, skills and experience in child growth and development. They identify and reinforce experiences which occur in the home and which parents can use as educational activities for their children.

The education services component must meet the following performance standards for parent involvement:

- Include parents in program planning and curriculum development and have them serve as resource persons.
- Educate parents in child development and developmental behavior problems of preschool children under a program jointly developed with all component services.
- Train parents in observing the growth and development of their children in the home environment and in identifying and handling special developmental needs.
- Include parents in center, classroom, and home program activities.
- Provide methods for helping parents understand and use a variety of methods to foster learning and development of their children, including home activities.
- Have regular conferences with parents and make at least three home visits each year, if acceptable to parents.
- Train staff to work with parents of children with special needs and to coordinate relevant referral services.

Parent Involvement in Health Services

The primary objectives of the health services component are to provide the child's family with opportunities to develop health care skills and insight into their childrens' health needs and to link the family to an ongoing health care system so that the child will continue to receive comprehensive health care after leaving the Head Start program.

The performance standards provide for the inclusion of parents in the Health Services Advisory Committee which advises in the planning, operation, and evaluation of the health services program. In addition, the performance standards require the provision of an organized health education program which ensures that:

- Parents are provided with information about all available health resources.
- Parents are encouraged to become involved in the health care of their child (advance parent or guardian authorization for health screening and examinations must be obtained and parents are encouraged to accompany their children to medical and dental appointments).
- Parents are given the opportunity to learn the principles of preventive health, emergency first-aid measures, and safety practices.

The objectives for parent involvement in the *mental health* part of the health services component are to:

- Provide parents with an understanding of child growth and development, an appreciation of individual differences, and the need for a supportive environment.
- Develop a positive attitude toward mental health services and a recognition of the contributions of psychology, medicine, social services, education, and other disciplines to the mental health program.

In order to meet the performance standards for mental health services, a mental health professional must be available to orient parents and work with them to achieve the objectives of the mental health program. The plan must also provide for regular group meetings of parents and program staff, parental consent for special mental health services, opportunity for parents to obtain individual assistance, and active involvement of parents in meeting the individual mental health needs of their children.

The objectives for parent involvement in the *nutrition* part of the health services component include the following:

- Help the staff, child, and family to understand the relationship of nutrition to health, the factors which influence food practices, a variety of ways to provide for nutritional needs and to apply this knowledge in the development of sound food habits even after leaving the Head Start program.
- Demonstrate the interrelationships of nutrition to other activities of the Head Start program and its contribution to the overall child development goals.
- Involve all staff, parents, and other community agencies, as appropriate, in meeting the child's nutritional needs so that nutritional care provided by Head Start complements and supplements that of the home and community.

The performance standards for nutrition services require identification of the nutritional needs and problems of the children in the Head Start program and of their families, including information about family eating habits and special dietary needs and feeding problems, especially of children with special needs. Families must receive education in the selection and preparation of foods, guidance in home and money management, and help in consumer education.

The performance standards plan makes special provision for the involvement of parents and appropriate community agencies in planning, implementing, and evaluating the nutritional services and requires the following:

- The Policy Council or Committee and the Health Services Advisory Committee will have the opportunity to review and comment on the nutrition services.
- The nutritional status of the children will be discussed with their parents.
- Information about meals and nutrition activities will be shared regularly with parents.
- Parents will be informed of the benefits of food assistance programs.
- Community agencies will be enlisted to assist eligible families in participating in food assistance programs.

Parent Involvement in Social Services

In addition to recruiting and enrolling eligible children, the social services component aims to involve parents in the center and home program and related activities, to assist the family in its own efforts to improve the condition and quality of family life, and to make parents aware of community services and resources and help parents use them effectively.

The social services component must meet the following performance standards:

- Provide emergency assistance or crisis intervention.
- Furnish information about available community services and how to use them.
- Establish a role of advocacy and spokesmanship for Head Start families.
- Contact a child's parent or guardian when he attends irregularly or has been absent four consecutive days.
- Identify the social service needs of families and work with other community agencies to develop programs to meet those needs.

The performance standards plan also requires close cooperation with existing community resources in the following ways:

- Helping parent groups work with other neighborhood and community groups with similar concerns.
- Communicating to other community agencies the needs of Head Start families and ways to meet those needs.
- Preparing a community resource list and making it available to families and staff.

FORM OF THE PLAN

Unlike the content, the form of the parent involvement plan is determined, not by national Head Start policies, but by each Head Start program. Once again, the plan should be designed to meet the goals and objectives of the parent involvement component and explicitly describe the steps and strategies for achieving these goals.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

The planning process may be determined at the regional or local level. It will be up to the coordinator to arrange definite times and locations for staff and parents to meet to work out the plan. The coordinator will probably be responsible for inviting interested parent and regional representatives to participate. Parents may volunteer or be nominated at one of the early orientation meetings, or each classroom or center committee may select a representative.

The team should meet several times over a period of several weeks to plan and schedule activities, assign responsibilities for carrying out plans, make revisions, and submit the final draft to the parent policy group for their review and approval.

In order for the coordinator to keep abreast of who is doing what and when, a planning book can be useful. The following chart gives an example of what a page in the coordinator's planning book might look like.

SAMPLE PAGE IN A PLANNING BOOK

Objective: Improve communication among parents, staff, program management (communication has been haphazard!!! how to improve?)

Component	What	Who	When
Education:	Write brief outlines on board of what concepts being worked on, the story read that day, what kind of a day it's been	Teaching Staff	Daily!!
Nutrition:	Post menu for the week. Send menu for coming week home with children Friday. Use menu as short newsletter giving info on upcoming events, recipes, nutrition tips.	Barbara Barbara & Staff	Weekly Weekly
Social Services/ Parent Involvement	Workshop on Communications — use techniques from *Parents & Teachers Together?* Invite P. I. Personnel from Region!!	John, Joy, P.I. staff	Oct. 3 Oct. 10
Health:	Section in monthly newsletter. Get list of local health services out to *every* parent listing:	Doris	By July 21.
(Fill Doris in about new womens' clinic I just heard about)	1. name of clinic (e.g. speech, hearing, allergy, prenatal, etc.) 2. location 3. hours 4. phone number 5. what they do 6. names of doctors, nurses, receptionists? 7. procedures for admission. Write description of Doris' function into Parents' Handbook so they know how to use her Have Doris hang out in parent lounge 2-3 x/wk. so parents have a chance to know her.		By July 21.

Chapter Ten

DEVELOPING A COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM

Clear communication among parents, staff, administration and policy groups have proved to be an important factor in successful parent participation. Head Start performance standards require that a planned communications system be developed to assure regular two-way communications between parents and staff and to assure the transmittal of information to and from parents and policy groups.

The communications system should be planned by the parent involvement coordinator, parents, and staff. Those who develop the parent involvement plan may assume responsibility for planning the communications system, or a separate committee may be formed. The committee might include the center director, parent involvement coordinator, heads of component services, policy groups, and parent representatives. Community members skilled in communications could also provide assistance. Planners should determine what information should be communicated, what media or means of communication should be used, a schedule for regular planned communications, and assignments of responsibility for various communications.

COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN PARENTS AND STAFF

Information To Communicate

Parents and staff should exchange information about the program and its services, activities for children, the progress being made by children, policy group actions and issues, and resources in the community. Staff must be well-informed themselves so they can communicate clearly with parents.

Means of Communication

Parents and staff communicate with each other in both formal and informal ways throughout the year. Formal means of communication include newsletters, policy group meetings, general parent meetings, and training sessions. While formal communications are easier to plan in advance, informal interchanges between parents and staff members are often more effective. These include parent-staff conferences, phone calls, home visits, notes, and brief conversations.

Newsletters should be clear and concise; topics should be interesting and varied. Topics could include the following:

- Dates and agendas for meetings; summaries of previous meetings.
- Home activities to reinforce and expand center experiences.
- Expressions of appreciation of volunteers and requests for volunteers for specific jobs.
- Job openings.
- Future field trips and reports of field trips taken by parents.
- Description of a community agency or service (one per issue).
- Policy group report, including a summary of the minutes, budget or program matter to consider, and important actions taken.
- Column by staff member giving child-rearing tips or other information (one per issue).
- Letter from the director.

- Election information.
- Recommendations of TV specials or magazine articles.
- Interviews with persons in the community

The way in which parents and staff communicate during *conferences, home visits, phone calls,* and brief *conversations* is often more important than what they say. Such things as body language, voice quality, pauses, and silences convey as much information as words. Staff members should be alert to the nonverbal signals parents are sending as well as to their verbal message.

In conversing with parents, listening is as important as talking. *Active listening,* or reflecting another's feelings, is a helpful tool to use. Below are some hints on how to be an active listener.

- Notice especially the attitude and feelings involved in the message.
- Tell the person as exactly as you can what you heard him say in terms of the feelings and attitudes you heard expressed.
- Try to use words different from the sender without changing his meaning.
- Do not add or subtract from the sender's message. But deal with the *feelings* you hear instead of staying with the facts.
- Do not respond with a message of your own, such as evaluating, sympathizing, giving own opinion, using logic or persuasion, analyzing, advising, ordering, or questioning.
- Some ways to start learning to respond to the feelings you hear expressed might be to start your response in the following ways:
  1. "You feel that . . . ,"
  2. "Sounds like you feel . . . ,"
  3. "What I hear you saying is . . . ,"
- Some benefits of being an active listener are:
  1. Shows that listener is interested and cares for speaker.
  2. Proves that speaker has been heard and understood.
  3. Offers speaker chance to express feelings and ventilate.
  4. Communicates acceptance.
  5. Fosters speaker's moving from the superficial to deeper feelings and fosters insights.
  6. Fosters speaker's growth as his own problem-solver.
  7. Establishes a warm and honest relationship.

Scheduling Communications

The timing of communications should not be haphazard; parents appreciate knowing when they can expect opportunities to exchange information with the staff.

The planners should determine how often various types of communication will take place. The schedule should include weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annual communications. The schedule should be realistic in terms of how much can actually be accomplished by staff members. It is better to plan a quarterly newsletter than a monthly one which goes out three weeks late. Below is a sample communications schedule.

- *Weekly communications*
  Mimeographed home learning activities from teacher to parent
  Parent Activity
- *Monthly Communications*
  Newsletter
  Parent meeting
  Phone call to parents
- *Quarterly Communications*
  Parent-teacher conferences
  Parent social event

In addition, home visits should be made at least three times a year.

Delegating Responsibility For Communications

The planners should clearly establish who will assume responsibility for seeing that each form of

communication is carried out on schedule. In addition, if the person responsible needs additional help, assistants should be selected.

COMMUNICATIONS WITH POLICY GROUPS

Because policy groups can only make responsible decisions when they have the necessary information, it is imperative that they be well-informed about program status, policies, problems, and changes. The director and parent involvement coordinator should make the following information available to policy group members before meetings; the groups should receive the regular reports at least five days prior to their meeting.

- *Regular Monthly Financial Report:*

  This report should show how much money has been spent to date on each budgeted item, and how much money is left. It also should show any changes of monies from one item to another, as well as the reasons for such change. (Such changes should not be made without prior approval of the policy group). The financial projection (money to be spent) for the following month should be included.

- *Regular Monthly Program Status Report:*

  The monthly report on the status in achieving the goals and objective of program should tell of program progress, any program problems, and the measures taken to correct them. It should also state program needs and recommendations to fulfill such needs. The report should be in summary form and include information on all delegate agency programs.

- *Report on Staff Vacancies and Copies of Job Announcements:*

  This report should state why the job is vacant, the date when the vacancy occurred, and the special circumstance which created the vacancy. Job announcements should also include a full work description with typical tasks to be performed, salary scale and qualifications. The policy group personnel committee should evaluate the need to fill such a vacancy.

- *Copies of All Correspondence With The Administration for Children, Youth and Families:*

  This information is necessary so that the PPC can be well informed about any problems identified by ACYF and the measures needed to correct them. These reports reflect the program's progress or problems as seen by ACYF and also indicate the responsiveness of the grantee Head Start administration to those problems. The reports also provide a measure for administrative evaluation.

- *Copies of All New Guidelines:*

  Any new guidelines should be immediately sent to all policy group members so that they will be informed of new program changes or requirements.

- *Copies of All New Legislation Affecting Head Start or Child Care:*

  The policy groups should be kept informed of all new legislative changes. These changes may affect the administration of the program, its priorities, and the amount of money to be allotted to it.

- *A Report on All Program Changes:*

  This report should contain a summary of the old program, the reason for changes, and an estimate of the amount of money involved to make the change. Also, the report should describe the new program with a complete plan for implementation, showing how it will serve to achieve existing goals.

- *A Progress Report on the Grant Application Process with a Time Schedule:*

  This report is needed so that the policy group can review and be involved in every stage of the building of the program. The time schedule is essential so that the policy group can determine if deadlines are being met.

- *List of Upcoming Meetings and Conferences:*

  A schedule of meetings and conferences for parents and staff should be submitted to the PPC so that they can decide which meetings should be attended. The policy committee should approve any travel, per diem, or related fees for parents or staff taken from the Head Start budget, unless such activities are specified and approved at time of proposal submission.

- *Grant Application (Funding Package):*

  The PPC should have copies of the grant application which they approved at the time of submission to ACYF, as well as copies of the approved funding package. The PPC can refer to the funding package when reviewing program expenditures.

- *Copies of the Minutes of Meetings from Delegate Agencies, Boards and Policy Groups:*

  Members of policy groups should receive copies of minutes from delegate or grantee board meetings and all policy group meetings. These minutes provide information on the degree to which representatives are voicing the views of parents. They also provide for program evaluation.

- *Standing and Special Committee Reports:*

  All standing and special committees should submit their written reports and recommendations to the total policy group for approval. The reports should contain a list of matters discussed, opinions of the committee, factual data, rationale for recommendation and the actual recommendations.

COMMUNICATIONS WITH COMMUNITY AGENCIES

Community agencies often have been involved in planning a Head Start Program. It is important to nurture their initial investment through frequent communications. One way of insuring the continuing involvement of community representatives is including them in the membership of the parent policy committee and council. Additionally, progress reports and newsletters should be forwarded to all agencies regularly. News letters are opportunities to acknowledge and thank these agencies for help given or stands taken. Community members should be invited to social events and ceremonies at the center and to conduct training in their areas of expertise. As Head Start staff and parents visit other programs and develop relationships with staff members in community health and welfare agencies, a sense of cooperation and responsibility for keeping each other informed of the needs of Head Start families develops.

The parent involvement coordinator works in cooperation with the social services component to maintain these important relationships. Together they need to clarify responsibilities for making and maintaining contacts with the appropriate agencies and institutions. It helps both components to develop a concrete and workable plan for sharing information, orally or in writing.

Information on financial assistance, family and employment counseling, legal aid, adult education and vocational training should be collected and studied by staff so that they can inform parents. A list of these services and agencies should be updated regularly for parents by the parent involvement or social services coordinator.

Chapter Eleven

DOCUMENTING PARENT INVOLVEMENT

In order to assure that parents have participated in the Head Start program in conformance with the performance standards, the staff must document or furnish written evidence of parent involvement. The parent involvement coordinator can assist in this task by collecting information, maintaining records, and writing reports about parent participation.

COLLECTING INFORMATION

The parent involvement coordinator should develop procedures for collecting information about parent involvement from staff members and parents on a regular basis, perhaps monthly. Types of information to be collected include:

- Records of staff members' contacts with individual parents, such as conferences, home visits, conversations, and notes (See following chart for a sample checklist form).
- Attendance sheets from orientation and parent meetings.
- Volunteer and observer schedules and sign-in sheets.
- Minutes of policy group meetings.
- Newsletters and other written communications to parents.
- Newspaper clippings about parent activities.
- Other evidence of parent attendance and participation in activities.

MAINTAINING RECORDS OF PARENT PARTICIPATION

The coordinator should review and record the information regularly collected from staff and parents and keep these records on file. In addition, the coordinator should file copies of the following documents:

- Policy council and policy committee bylaws indicating the following:
  1. Purpose and responsibilities
  2. Schedule for regular meetings
  3. Procedure for calling a special meeting
  4. Total number of members
  5. Number of parents who will represent each center or delegate agency
  6. Method for selecting community representatives
  7. Method for filling vacancies
  8. Term of office and maximum length of membership
  9. Number needed for a quorum
  10. Names and duties of standing committees, as well as procedures for naming their members.
  11. Procedure for amending bylaws
- Membership list of policy council and policy committee.

- Minutes of meetings of policy council, committees, center committee, and other groups involving parents; these should indicate names of those present, issues discussed, decisions made and action taken.
- Personnel policies; these should spell out how the policy council and committee are involved in hiring and firing.
- Parent involvement plan.
- Reports on parent involvement.

REPORTING PARENT INVOLVEMENT

The parent involvement coordinator is responsible for writing reports on parent participation in the program on a regular basis. These reports might include the following:

- Brief reports on parent activities as they occur; summarize activities and responses of parents and staff; attach any evaluation forms used.
- Reports on major events, such as six-week first aid course: same procedure as above; ask parents and staff to contribute to report.
- Monthly summaries of participation including:
  1. number of parents who attended activities
  2. number of staff/parent contacts (see sample form on following page)
  3. number of parents who observed or volunteered
  4. number of parent activities held
  5. number of parent participation hours.
- Quarterly progress reports on the implementation of the parent involvement plan; measure performance against objectives; identify successes and problem areas (the latter may serve as justification for changing the plan, if necessary).
- Annual assessment of the parent involvement component.
- Reports on volunteer activities.

PARENT/STAFF CONTACTS

Staff Member_____ Month_____ Total Contacts_____

Name of Parent	Home Visit	Scheduled Conference	Phone Call	Conversation	Note

Names of parents in each class should be typed in. Copies go to all staff members who deal with those parents. Staff members write the date of contact under each heading. Parent Involvement Coordinator summarizes total contacts on her master copy. A summary of staff-parent contacts should be put in each child's record.

Chapter Twelve

EVALUATING PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Parents, staff, and administration should regularly evaluate parent involvement in the Head Start program. By determining how actively and effectively parents participate, they can adjust and revise the program to better meet parents' needs.

The parent involvement plan can be used as a measure of parent involvement. Those who evaluate can focus on the following questions.

- How adequate is the plan in achieving its goals?
- How well is the plan being carried out?
- How satisfied are the parents with the program as planned?
- In what way should the plan be revised?

The parent involvement coordinator can assist in the evaluation by devising methods and planning a schedule for evaluation.

METHODS OF EVALUATION

Objective evaluation is a difficult task. People tend to see and hear what they wish to or expect, rather than what is actually taking place. The methods of evaluation chosen should help the evaluator perceive things as they are.

Below are some methods appropriate for evaluating parent involvement:

- Observations of parents, parent-child interactions, and parent-staff interactions
- Interviews with parents and staff
- Questionnaires to parents and staff
- Review of reports, summaries and documents of parent participation
- Self-assessment/validation instrument.

Observation

By carefully noting what parents say, how they say it, their facial expressions, gestures, and movements, staff members and other parents can tell much about how parents feel, how their needs are being met, and if their behavior is changing in any way. Good opportunities to observe are during meetings, social events, conferences, home visits, and when parents are with their children at the center.

Interviews

Interviews with parents specifically for the purpose of evaluation or during regular conferences or home visits can yield much information about what parents think or feel about the parent involvement program and how it has helped them. When interviewing parents, it is usually better to focus on one area of the parent involvement program, such as parent education, rather than on the total program. Specific questions such as "Did Dr. Jones's advice on discipline help you handle your child better?" usually bring out more information than general questions such as "What did you learn from the program?" The interviewer should not express judgments about what parents say. Afterwards, the interviewer should write a summary of what the parent said.

Questionnaires

Questionnaires for the purpose of evaluation should be brief, easy to read, and give opportunities for expressing a wide range of opinions. One helpful technique is to provide a statement, not a question, and ask parents to rate their level of agreement or disagreement by marking a number from one to five. The purpose, form and questions in any questionnaire should be thoroughly explained to parents before they begin their answers.

The Self-Assessment/Validation Instrument

Head Start programs are required to annually evaluate how well they have satisfied the performance standards. The Self-Assessment/Validation Instrument is a form to be used in performing this self-evaluation. Parents, as well as staff members should participate in this evaluation. Parents should receive training on the SAVI process and participate on the team.

SCHEDULE FOR EVALUATION

A schedule for evaluation of the parent involvement program should be planned early in the program year. Regular evaluations provide the information needed to revise the parent-involvement plan over the course of the year and to perform the annual self-assessment. Each center should plan a schedule according to its needs. Following is a sample schedule with suggested methods.

- Evaluation of individual activities by parents and staff as they occur:
  1. questionnaires and checklists
  2. observations.
- Quarterly evaluation by parent and staff representatives:
  1. review of reports, monthly summaries, documents
  2. questionnaire to staff, center committee, and policy council.
- Semi-annual evaluation by all parents:
  1. questionnaire to all parents
  2. interviews with sample of parents.
- Annual evaluation by parent, staff, administrative and regional representatives.
  1. self-assessment/validation instrument
  2. review of previous evaluations.

Chapter Thirteen

HEAD START'S LEGACY TO PARENTS

> *"The past is a dream. The future is a vision. The present well-lived can make of the past, a dream of beauty and, of the future, a vision of hope."*
>
> *— Author Unknown*

Perhaps the greatest gift Head Start can give a parent is hope. And parents do leave the program with hope — the promise of a future that can become increasingly rewarding. For parents leave Head Start with more confidence in themselves as persons and are, therefore, more effective parents. They have become aware of their value and their strengths. They understand their rights and have learned to use community resources to assure these rights.

But more, parents realize they are the primary influence on their children. The way in which they view themselves will reflect how their children view them. And how well they create an atmosphere conducive to learning and growing will ensure or deny their child a better future.

A wise pediatrician, stressing to a young mother the great influence she had on her daughter, said, "Your child will become what you are." And what she really meant was that the mother's values, confidence, view of herself, and her own example, would strongly affect her child. As the child's first teachers, parents have a tremendous responsibility, for they are the most important teachers the child will ever have.

Head Start believes in parents. The parents who have completed the Head Start program will continue to provide their children with opportunities to grow and learn. The parents will continue to use the skills they have developed to pursue job opportunities. They know where to go for assistance within the community and how to work within the community system to effect the changes they need. The parents who leave Head Start have learned how meetings are conducted and how decisions are made. They have learned to speak up and out for what they believe in and need.

Head Start parents will face future encounters within the community — PTA, teachers, landlords, employers, community services, — undaunted by former fears, secure within themselves, knowledgable about their rights, and convinced that they will be heard.

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Resource A

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

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Resource B

FINDING RESOURCES IN THE COMMUNITY

It is the responsibility of the parent involvement coordinator to know the community and its resources so that she can guide parents to the support systems that are available to them. In urban areas there are likely to be an array of services; the task is to determine which will really deliver the kind of assistance sought by a family. In rural areas the coordinator may have to do some more rigorous searching in order to piece together appropriate services for the parents with whom

	PUBLIC	PRIVATE	VOLUNTARY AGENCIES
SOCIAL SERVICES Financial:	County Dept. of Public Welfare • AFDC • Food Stamps • Medicare/Medicaid Social Security Administration field representative • SSI benefits	College & university scholarships and student aid office	
Counseling:	County mental health services (under Health or Welfare Dept.) Child Welfare Agency Juvenile Services in court system	Child Guidance Clinic Family & Children Services	
Housing:	Housing Authority Mayor's Council on housing		
Supportive:	Day Care Unit of Child Welfare Agency	Cooperative Day Care Association	Day Care Child Development Council Big Brothers Big Sisters YWCA/YMCA

she is working. The social services staff of the Head Start program are valuable resources in this process. The following charts offer some ideas on where to look for help within the community. Coordinators should also contact local civic organizations, for many of them have funds to be used for specific purposes, such as medical needs and scholarships.

FEDERAL AGENCIES	CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS	PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS	COORDINATING AGENCIES
	Scholarship committees of Kiwanis Lion's Club Junior League Jaycees, etc.		Information & Referral Centers Health & Welfare Councils United Way Community Services Administration Community Action Agency
ACYF Head Start Home Start			

	PUBLIC	PRIVATE	VOLUNTARY AGENCIES
HEALTH	County Health Dept. *Clinics:* Dental Well-baby Neighborhood clinics Speech and hearing clinic Orthopedic clinic Public Health Dept. Public Health Nurses Drug treatment center Alcoholism center	*Local Hospital:* Dental clinic Well-baby clinic Maternal and child health center Neighborhood clinic Speech and hearing clinic Orthopedic clinic Rehabilitation Center Visiting Nurses Association Homemaker health-aid services	Easter Seal United Cerebral Palsy Assoc., Inc Heart Association Kidney Foundation
ADVOCACY			Children's Defense Fund National Council for Children & Youth Closer Look
EDUCATION	County Board of Education Special Ed. Adult Ed. Vocational & Technical Ed. Dept. of Agriculture Extension Service (course materials)	Colleges Community Colleges Universities Dept of Special Ed. Child Develop. programs Mental Health programs Depts. of Continuing Ed.	Red Cross (training in first aid, family health, prevention of child abuse) Child Development Associates Consortium, Inc.
EMPLOYMENT TRAINING	Dept. of Labor Employment and Training Division (Manpower) CETA		Salvation Army Goodwill Industries Red Cross (first aid courses) Family health courses Courses on child abuse
RECREATION	Dept. of Parks and Recreation		YMCA YWCA

FEDERAL AGENCIES	CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS	PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS	COORDINATING AGENCIES
National Institute on Alcohol & Alcoholism National Institute on Drug Abuse	Ask each organization what their special interests are	American Association of Pediatrics	Information & Referral Centers 4-C's Health and Welfare Council Handicapped Information
		Lawyer Referral State Bar	
Office of Education Bureau of Education for the Handicapped Dept. of Labor	League of Women Voters	National Education Association	

Resource C

ORGANIZATIONS PROVIDING INFORMATION AND MATERIALS FOR PARENT AND CHILD EDUCATORS

Adult Education Association
810 18th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006
(202) 347-9574

Publishes a leadership pamphlet series. Each pamphlet is 49 pages and costs $1.25. Bulk prices are also available. Some titles are "How to Lead a Discussion," "Taking Action In the Community", "How To Use Role Playing," and "Conducting Workshops." A list of publications is available.

American Parents Committee
52 Vanderbilt Avenue
New York, New York 10017

Publishes "Washington Report on Federal Legislation for Children" quarterly. Annual subscription costs $10.00.

Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI)
3615 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20016
(202) 363-6963

A non-profit organization, concerned with the education and well-being of all children. Provides workshops for credit, conferences, a library and information services, and publishes "Childhood Education," an excellent journal available 6 times yearly for $10.00. Some of their publications include "Migrant Children: Their Education," "Children's View of Themselves," "Good & Inexpensive Books for Children," and "Parenting." Send for their publications catalogue.

Center for the Study of Parent Involvement
2544 Etna Street
Beverley, California 94704

An organization developed by and for those whose job is parent involvement. Publishes a newsletter "Apple Pie".

Childrens' Defense Fund
1520 New Hampshire Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C.

The Children's Foundation
1028 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

Publishes a monthly bulletin called, "Feeds Kids — It's The Law," which is concerned with federal nutrition programs. Annual subscription is $4.50.

The Day Care and Child Development Council of America, Inc.
1012 14th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20005

A non-profit organization committed to increasing the availability of child services and to raising the quality of child care programs. Publishes newsletters and bulletins of current literature and audio-visual materials, organizes conferences, and provides technical assistance.

Dissemination Center for Bilingual/Bicultural Education
6504 Tracer Lane
Austin, Texas 78721

Collects curriculum materials and disseminates a monthly annotated bibliography called *CARTEL*, developed for Spanish speaking children.

Home and School Institute, Inc.
Trinity College
Washington, D.C. 20017

A non-profit educational organization. Develops programs and publications to help parents become better teachers of their children and to help educators work more effectively with parents and the community. Offers courses and publishes a newsletter six times a year. Some publications are "Community From School to Home," "Educational Events - Developing the Home as an Educational Institution," and "Volunteers - Hands On in the Classroom".

Inter-American Research Associates
201 North St. Mar's Road, Suite 703
San Antonio, Texas 78205

Collects, prepares, and disseminates bilingual/bicultural pre-school curriculum and resource materials.

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
1834 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20009

A non-profit organization, with affiliate groups at local, state, and regional levels. NAEYC's goal is to act on behalf of the needs and rights of young children, primarily focusing on educational services. Publishes "Young Children," a bi-monthly journal, provides a brochure of current publications, organizes conferences and provides legislative information.

National Council of Organizations for Children and Youth (NCOCY)
1910 K Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006
(202) 785-4180

Coordinates 175 private and voluntary organizations committed to adequate family living standards and family oriented services to foster the health, education and well-being of children and youth. Holds conferences, and publishes a handbook, "Congress and Federal Agencies — Directory for Child Advocates." Available for $1.00, plus postage, it lists all senators, congressmen, committees, and their phone numbers.

Parents as Resources (PAR)
576 Hill Terrace
Winnetka, Illinois 60093

Offers a workshop training program with accompanying written materials for: 1) the development of a preschool curriculum by parents and non-professional staff; and 2) leadership training of neighborhood personnel to conduct parent workshops in their local communities and of professional staff.

The Parenting Materials Information Center
SEDL
211 E. 7th Street
Austin, Texas 78701
(512) 476-6861

Offers parenting materials covering such topics as child abuse, discipline, early childhood activities, exceptional children, family resources for parenting, health and safety, pregnancy, and birth.

The Program Consultation Service of the Child Study Association of America
9 East 89 Street
New York, New York 10028

Provides consultation on initiating, conducting, or reorganizing parent education programs.

Rural Education and Small Schools
New Mexico State University, Box 3AP
Los Cruces, New Mexico 88003

Southwest Educational Development Laboratory
National Educational Laboratory
Publishers, Inc.
P.O. Box 1003
Austin, Texas 78767

Develops and disseminates bilingual/bicultural curriculum programs.

Resource D

ORGANIZATIONS SERVING PARENTS AND CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

In addition to local agencies, the following can offer speakers, advice, publications or filmstrips in their particular fields. In some cases, a state or local office may be found in the yellow pages of the phone book under "Associations".

Closer Look
Box 1492
Washington, D.C. 20013

Closer Look, the National Information Center for the Handicapped, is set up to provide practical advice on how to find educational programs and other kinds of special services for handicapped children and youth. Write indicating what kind of help is being sought. Staff will respond with an information packet that includes background pamphlets, suggestions on steps to take to locate services, facts about laws affecting the handicapped, lists of helpful organizations, suggested reading, and other down-to-earth information.

HEARING AND LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES

National Association of the Deaf
814 Thayer Avenue
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910
(301) 587-1788

Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf
317 Volta Place, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20007
(202) 337-5220

Speech Rehabilitation Institute
61 Irving Place
New York, New York 10003

National Association of Hearing and Speech Agencies
919 18th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20014
(202) 295-3844

PHYSICAL HANDICAPS

American Heart Association
44 E. 23rd Street
New York, New York 10010

Epilepsy Foundation of America
1828 L Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

Muscular Dystrophy Association of America
1700 Broadway
New York, New York 10019
(212) 586-0808

National Easter Seal Society for Crippled Children and Adults
2023 W. Odgen Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60612
(312) 243-8400

National Multiple Sclerosis Society
257 Park Avenue South
New York, New York 10010
(212) 674-4100

United Cerebral Palsy Association, Inc.
66 E. 34th Street
New York, New York 10016
(212) 889-6655

Cystic Fibrosis Foundation
202 E. 44th Street
New York, New York 10017

National Paraplegia Foundation
333 N. Michigan Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60601

EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS, LEARNING DISABILITIES AND MENTAL RETARDATION

National Association for Mental Health
1800 N. Kent Street
Arlington, Virginia 22209

National Association for Retarded Children
2709 Avenue E
East Arlington, Texas 76011

National Society for Autistic Children
621 Central Avenue
Albany, New York 12206

Association for Children with Learning Disabilities
2200 Browsville Road
Pittsburg, Pennsylvania 15210

Family Service Association of America
44 E. 23rd Street
New York City 10010

League of Emotionally Disturbed Children
171 Madison Avenue
New York City 10017

BLINDNESS AND VISUAL PROBLEMS

National Society for the Prevention of the Blindness, Inc.
79 Madison Avenue
New York, New York 10011

American Foundation for the Blind
1511 K Street, N.W., Suite 637
Washington, D.C. 20005
(202) 347-1559

American Printing House for the Blind
1839 Frankford Avenue
Louisville, Kentucky 40206

SPECIAL PARENT NEEDS

The American Humane Association, Children's Division
Box 1266
Denver, Colorado 80201

Ask for the association's publication on child protection (request price list).

La Leche League International, Inc.
9616 Minneapolis Avenue
Franklin Park, Illinois 60131
(312) 445-7730

National Alliance Concerned with School-Age Parents
7315 Wisconsin Avenue
Bethesda, Maryland
(301) 654-2335

The National Center for the Prevention and Treatment of Child Abuse and Neglect
University of Colorado Medical Center
1001 Jasmine
Denver, Colorado 80220

National Mothers of Twins Club
612 Wallace Drive
Wayne, Pennsylvania 19087

NIMH Communications Center
Rockville, Maryland 20852

Ask for selected references on child abuse and neglect.

Parents Anonymous
2810 Artesia Blvd.
Redondo Beach, California 90278
(800) 421-0353 (toll free number)

Parents Without Partners, Inc.
7910 Woodmont Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20014

Widowed, Inc.
1406 Spring Rock
Houston, Texas 77055